MOONLÄDY

By UPTON CLOSE

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By UPTON CLOSE

IN THE LAND OF THE LAUGHING BUDDHA

THE REVOLT OF ASIA

OUTLINE HISTORY OF CHINA
(WITH DR. H. H. GOWEN)

TRANSLATIONS OF CHINESE POETRY
(IN BRAITHWAITE'S ANTHOLOGY)

MOONLADY

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BY

UPTON CLOSE

G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS
NEW YORK — LONDON
The Knickerbocker Press
1927

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by
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(Upton Close)

Made in the United States of America

DEDICATED TO THE OLD-FASHIONED IDEA THAT
A NOVEL SHOULD HAVE A PLOT; AND TO THE
NEW IDEA THAT "CHINESE STORIES"
SHOULD TELL US AS MUCH ABOUT
CHINESE PEOPLE AS ABOUT
WESTERNERS AGAINST A
CHINESE BACKGROUND

The songs which the Blossoms sang are given in translations of Cranmer-Byng, Waley and Giles, as well as in the author's own.

The story is laid in the recent period of the Japanese imperialist attempt against Chinese sovereignty. That policy of Japan is now revoked.

—The Author.

THE AUTHOR THANKS:

"Moonlady."

Winfield Shiras, who knows what should be told.

Neeta Marquis, who knows what should not be told.

Marshall N. Dana, "The Pillar," who is not yet too ossified to appreciate the description of a kiss.

The Luminous Lady, the Radiant One, and the Exquisite Person.

And his little assistant, Ruth H. Greiner, who so exuberantly took the labor while he had the fun.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
I.—Peking: The Stage	3
II.—Garden-Party: Helen	28
III.—Ramparts: Moonlady	59
IV.—East and West	87
V.—Oath	111
VI.—Joy-City	129
VII.—Tsin	145
VIII.—The Shansee General	161
IX.—Pear Garden	182
X.—"Spittoon"	198
XI.—Sacred Whiskers	235
XII.—Heaven-Peace Gate	253
XIII.—From the Belly of Laughing Buddha	278

PAGE

XIV.—Cares of State 290

XV.—Choice 304

XVI.—The Call of Race 320

XVII.—The Document 340

XVIII.—Portals 359

XIX.—The Silken Cord 371

MOONLADY

I

PEKING: THE STAGE

IN the precious cool of the late summer afternoon a young man and woman rode slowly along the Highway of Heaven westward from Peking. It was the hour when hard daylight changes imperceptibly into the softness preceding sunset. A rich glow lay like a mantle of peace along the road and upon all the Charmed Land.

For a little, the two went on in silence. The girl, Helen Langdon, rode with an extraordinary grace. She seemed to share with her beautiful chestnut horse the secret of a buoyant rhythm. She bent suddenly and patted the horse's arching neck, then smiled up at her escort.

Barrie Weston turned a bit on the spirited but shapeless Mongol pony he was riding, and regarded her with appraising eyes.

"You are well suited to one another, Miss Langdon—you and Red Arrow," he said. "I should say, after one look at him, that he came from West China. Am I right?"

"Yes," she answered, flushing slightly. "He's a Gansoo. I don't know what I should ever do without him out here! Like all the rest of his breed, he was raised in the cave dwellings of the *loess* terraces along with human beings. He has never had to be broken, and I'm sure he's one of the most intelligent horses in the world. I adore him!"

Weston smiled at her enthusiasm.

"Did you discover him yourself?"

"No. I wish I had! Father has always promised to take me into the interior but since I finished school he has put me off by saying it has been too disturbed. He was away on my eighteenth birthday and brought me Red Arrow as my reward for staying at home."

A conception of the girl's father, rumored arch-manipulator of the Chinese political stage, crossed her escort's mind. What mission of official intrigue or investigation had taken this thoroughbred British gentleman as far as Gansoo, on the borders of Tibet and Mon-

golia?—But the thoroughbred daughter concerned him much more just now.

Weston studied her frankly. She could not have had Red Arrow long. The slender boyishness of her figure was accentuated by the long, black riding cloak she wore, and by the grey tweed breeches and burnished leather boots and whip. Under the straight-brimmed black riding hat a few stray wisps of hair glinted gold in the setting sun, against a skin of that famed English fairness which may have been responsible for first bringing the Normans to Britain. Her delicate features were regular—perhaps a bit too regular, Weston thought—but the azure lights in her eyes precluded monotony.

The young American lowered his eyes to his own costume. His pongee Russian blouse, open at the throat, marked with his Chinese ideograph embroidered in red on the pocket, and his flannel trousers shot with a thread of lustrous blue (he detested the white starched riding habit of foreign gentlemen in Peking) seemed out of keeping with his companion's immaculate conventionality. Why, he wondered, out of all the eligible men in this white

girl's paradise, had she chosen him as her escort? At least it proved that aristocracy was not identical with snobbishness.

"Let's race!" exclaimed the girl suddenly. She was looking at him with sparkling eyes. "This is such a lovely level stretch, between the Jade Fountain enclosure and the Temple of Sleeping Buddha! Of course," she added laughingly, with a teasing glance at Weston's pony, "it might not be quite fair. Otherwise I'd suggest a purse for the winner."

"It will be as fair as I can make it," he said, falling into her mood. "I have a suspicion there's dynamite in this strange looking beast of mine. What shall the purse be?"

"Let's just make it a race for fun," said Helen. "We'll consider it England against America—an event of tremendous international importance!"

Then, suddenly, they were off—up the dry creek bottom toward the Byzantine-style temple of Harmonious Shadow. With a laugh Barrie loosed his pony of all restraint. It tore out furiously, blind to all but the wild desire to stay ahead of its rival. The issue could never be doubted, yet as the Mongol plunged

madly over the rock-strewn surface, a full length ahead of Helen, the girl gave way to an excitement strange to her. Her breath came in terrified little gasps. "Red Arrow!" she urged, "Red, darling, beat him—do! Beat him,—*please!*"

At half a mile the Mongol was blowing, and Weston out of pity reined him down. Red Arrow and his mount shot by at a swift, easy lope. Exultantly Helen let him run far past. With a clean leap, head forward and feet back like a bird, he cleared an old stone viaduct leading out of the dried stream bed. Then she checked him gradually and headed back. Weston leaned on his saddle and noted the pride with which each slender hoof was lifted and the precision with which it was set down. He sensed the perfect blending of the girl rider with the poetry of the horse's motion. In a sudden humorous pity he stroked his Mongol's scrubby head.

She came toward him holding her whip high, a pleased mockery in her eyes.

"Congratulations!" called Weston. "You timed it beautifully. I'm ready to admit now that it wasn't a very fair race."

She reached down and stroked Red Arrow's sleek, lathering flank. "If only you didn't cheat! Your pony ran so splendidly at first."

"We did our best," he said with his infectious smile. "Anyway, you know we Americans take our sports terribly seriously."

Helen laughed merrily. Then she looked quickly toward the west, where the sun seemed to be dropping perceptibly beyond the rim of an enchanted world.

"Hadn't we better turn home now?" she suggested. "We can just make Peking by dark."

Weston agreed, and at a comfortable single-step broken by an occasional sharp canter, the pair took the winding avenue which—from the time of the Northern Capital's builder, Kublai Khan, to the fall of the Manchu dynasty—had been reserved for imperial traffic alone. Macadam now replaced the huge granite paving-slabs, and this road which had known only the pads of Kublai's elephants, Yung Lo's camels and the bare feet of the Manchu Dowager's human carriers, now experienced daily the destructive caress of pneumatic tires.

They skirted the Jade Fountain Enclosure

with its two perfume-bottle Indian pagodas surmounting the hill above the storied Black Dragon Pool. A bend brought them into the little Manchu village of High-de-ann, the market place of which clings precariously to either side of a high stone bridge built when the now terribly impoverished villagers drew at will from the imperial treasury. They passed out of the village under the Arch of Inscriptions and followed the curving red wall of the New Summer Palace.

"I suppose you get over these things!" said Weston, breaking a long silence. "But they still give me a palpitation every time I see them. There is such tremendous artistry here! This architecture seems to rise up out of squalor into golden fancy! But why in the world is the summer residence called the *New* Palace? That porcelain bastion on the hill-crest is covered with the moss of centuries!"

Helen explained as best she could. Many of the buildings were very old, but this huge enclosure had been turned from its former sacred uses into a garden of delight by the Empress Dowager, after the British Lord Elgin had dynamited the old Summer Palace in

1860. It had been built under the supervision of the early Jesuit priests, in a combination of Chinese and Byzantine architecture.

"The ruins are over there to the left," she said, pointing. "You can still find fragments of finely carved Corinthian columns. Shall we ride over and see them?"

"No, thanks—not with you, please! I might say uncomplimentary things about the British."

She regarded him seriously. "I must say, our forces *did* have provocation. Sir Harry Parkes and the others were so fearfully tortured! But I'll admit, I don't think even that was any excuse for Lord Elgin's vandalism."

Weston turned to contemplate the pagoda, the curving roof, the wall which rose and dipped upon the landscape. The mellow beauty and apparent submissiveness of China had made a champion of him already.

Helen followed his gaze to the horizon. On the left were the massive cubical archery-towers of Chien Lung. On the right rose the Eight Lee Pagoda, giving the impression, with its marble balconies fringed by swinging bronze bells, of a huge parent rock girdled with

flowers. Before them, at the end of a three mile straightaway shaded by huge willow trees, the crenellated wall of Peking stood up against the slanting flood of sunlight from the west.

"They are wonderful, aren't they!" she exclaimed. "And so eternally enduring—I mean as art. I could never grow tired of them."

"How long have you lived in Peking, Miss Langdon?"

"You might just as well call me 'Toots,'" she said slowly. "That's father's nickname for me. Most of my friends call me that."

"I'd rather call you Helen, if you don't mind."

Her gaze wavered. Calmly, but with a new flame in his large brown eyes, he waited for her to speak.

"Then do." A blush crept into her cheeks. She changed the subject quickly. "I believe you asked how long I have lived here."

"I did. But now I think you must have always been here—you seem so much a part of all this beauty."

"Please don't flatter," she protested. "Let's

just talk. I came here with father when I was twelve. Every time I return, even after short visits away, Peking seems more wonderful. But father says China is being spoiled, and the Chinese ruined by their new ideas. He talks of leaving Peking. I'm afraid I shall not be happy away from here. At least, I could never leave Red Arrow!"

"Doesn't Adviser Langdon like the young Chinese?"

"I think not. Father doesn't talk much to me about them. But I have heard him say they are ruining everything. They prate so much about liberty and democracy and abolition of unequal treaties and national dignity. He thinks you Americans encourage them and I am afraid he dislikes you for that, rather. They're groping for something different. See —they no longer produce beauties like these buildings nowadays."

"But it's a different age," he replied. "The English themselves are not building St. Paul's Cathedrals any more. Men and women of our time are more interested in building human relations than monuments of stone. They are trying to contribute to the art of living."

"But what are they trying to change in China?"

She was just a child asking about something outside of her world. Weston admired her unabashed naïveté.

He caught at a few impressions gathered along the way—poorly retained because of the opposite and entirely joyful viewpoint of the day. Four coolies painfully bearing a huge coffin had been pushed off the road by a large limousine carrying guards on either running-board. An open-fronted shrine sheltering hideous dust-buried *poosaas* flaunted its "Having petition certainly get answer" banners into the highway. Behind the ancient beauty of the Eight Lee Pagoda belched the chimneys of a modern electric light plant. Suddenly the din of the sunset bugles of the Western Encampment, stretching between the Summer Palace and the city wall, began blowing. There seemed to be a bugler for every squad.

As soon as he could be heard, Weston replied:

"You ask what they are trying to change—what I would change? Well, squalor, for one thing. Monopoly of wealth. Tyranny of su-

perstition. The ugliness of industrialism. The arrogance of militarism. And all monopolies of human beings, whether material or sentimental—whether through industry or marriage or parental claim or anything! Since we are where we are," he concluded, sweeping the landscape with a gesture, "let us abolish first the assumption of the superiority of the white race!"

He intended to sound bombastic. A self-depreciative impulse impelled him to make humor of the crusader who lived side by side with the artist in him. But she took him as seriously as at heart he was.

"Why," she cried gayly, "you would upset the whole world, wouldn't you? It seems so much safer to live the way we've always been brought up!"

Barrie rode for a few paces with glance fixed ahead. He was seeing through the thick wall of the city into the medley of sordidness and idealism finding expression in the plotting and counter-plotting of Asia's most pregnant capital. When he turned back to her his eyes were soft and apologetic.

"I confess to being very curious to know

how you were brought up, Helen." He spoke the newly permitted name uncertainly.

"Well, in spite of my talk I haven't had much rearing," she laughed, and then became quickly serious again. "Mother died when I was eleven. That was in India. Father was commander of an army post. He got a transfer to Peking as military attaché. Later, he became adviser to the Chinese President. He used to get governesses from England for me. Then he said he was sick of them all and taught me himself. I went to Paris for two years' finishing. I have been back home one year. That's all there is to me—I'm afraid my upbringing has been mostly spoiling, thanks to old *amah* and dear father!" She smiled whimsically at the thought.

"I wish I could know the Chinese people as you must," he said sincerely.

"But I really don't know any Chinese people except the servants and the old literati who taught me the language. And one has nothing to do with their affairs, you know, except to give them a *cumshaw* when their grandmothers die or their babies are born. Sometimes, father takes me to a feast with the

big Chinese officials. I like to go—but they patronize me so, and I know they pity father because I am not a boy. Since I came back from Paris I've met a few students and young Chinese. They seem very keen. I really don't understand why father dislikes them so. But I suppose they have no business mixing into politics."

Weston bit his lip to repress his sharp disagreement. He had been in China just six months and in Peking as many weeks, but he had apprehended the "their's not to question why" attitude of the "old China hands" towards the younger generation, with its forward questioning of all the painfully established relations between China and the "civilized" Powers. He was to pass through many experiences before he should come to recognize the sound common sense mingled with the avariciousness of the "old China hand's" position. Already he had begun to supplement his free lance correspondence for publications at home with impassioned justifications of the student-patriot movement in the local English-language papers.

Already, too, he was aware of the definite purpose which actuated this undercurrent of youthful patriotism. Rumors had reached him that the students had learned of a secret treaty which was to sell their country into the hands of Japan, and that they were planning to secure it by force from a corrupt Cabinet and expose it in the public press.

"Don't you think your father, as Adviser to the President, could be brought to see the students' side of the question?" he asked cautiously.

"Father has been in Chinese affairs a long time. He says the Chinese are all actors, but that it's better to have things in the hands of finished performers than amateurs. I doubt if his convictions could be changed. But, tit for tat, tell me something about yourself now. How do they bring up people in America?"

"I don't know," replied Weston. "I had considerably less of it than you. Mother was a singer—born in France. She was charr ing and lovely, but I never saw much of her. Father was a preacher—what you call a Dissenter—and hard boiled."

She laughed.

"You don't want me to explain that, do you?"

"No, some of your slang is self-explanatory. He must have been very influential to have such a claim on your American Minister. Please go on."

"He was a schoolmate of our Minister Plenipotentiary and Envoy Extraordinary, who has been so generous as to sponsor me in Peking society. Father sent me to a theological college where I had to earn my own board. At first, of course, I was going to be a musician like mother. But I discovered the training for that career required too much money for a boy earning his own way. So I switched to poetry, which seemed a less expensive enterprise. Naturally enough, I suppose, I have finished up as a newspaperman."

"But what about your mother?"

"I lost her when I was in high school. You and I have a bond between us in that respect."

His mouth was very wistful, she thought. She reached out and touched his sleeve gently.

The sun threw its last light over the conical tops of the Western Hills, lighting up the

great tower of East Straight Gate. They passed through the arch into the Northern Capital. Fantastic little lights began to appear in the open-front shops and out-door tea rooms. A comfortable kitchen odor pervaded the streets, assuring satisfaction for homely human wants.

Helen took a deep breath.

"Barrie," she hesitated a little over the name, "let's ride every day before breakfast!"

"Splendid! That means tomorrow morning!"

"And another thing—" she said. "Won't you come to the two affairs I've sent you invitations for?"

"I'd rather ride."

"But won't you please come to our next party? Father is having all Peking on Friday night. The notables are returning from their summer vacations and there will be so many people you ought to meet, Barrie!"

"All right—I'll be there. I was only afraid I might shame my host and hostess."

"Don't be silly!" She was like a happy child. "I'm so glad you'll come. Maybe you

will have a chance to chat with father about all these complicated Chinese matters."

They turned off the great market-lined avenue into a *hutung* paved with tipsy stone flags. The grey walls which it separated were surmounted by tufts of grass and displaced porcelain tiles whose unfading golden glaze shone under the light of square-chimneyed oil lanterns set at intervals on iron brackets. Where a pair of great red-lacquered doors broke the wall on one side they drew rein.

"Kanmendy!" called Helen, in her clear imperious contralto.

"Little Missie have come! Yes, Missie!" There was noise of a bar being lifted, and the doors swung in.

"Please come in!" she said, turning to Weston as he handed her down. "Gateman, take the horses. Red Arrow, darling, we've had a perfect day." She kissed her horse on the nose and produced the carrot from the pocket which he was already sniffing.

"I'll just stop to pay my respects to the Adviser," said Weston. "Then I'll be off."

As they went up the long, broad pathway through the front garden Colonel Langdon

stood waiting on the gaily-lit veranda of his study. Weston had heard of that room, known through Peking as the "Treasure-house," and had hoped some day to see its contents.

Langdon was slender, with high sharp nose and delicate brow. He showed none of the reputed woodenness of the old military man.

"Well, youngsters," he called, "you've made a long day of it!"

"Oh, father, we've had such a wonderful ride!" Helen snatched off her hat and ran up to her father's side. The two made a striking pair under the soft lantern lights—Helen's tousled, golden head a bare inch below the level of the Adviser's well-groomed, virile grey one. Gracious, poised, aristocrats both, thought Barrie, radiating the dignity and charm of British culture at its best. But when the Adviser turned to speak to him Weston experienced a vague feeling of disquiet, which seemed to spring from something in the man's eyes. They were grey and cold, with the impression of a yellow glint.

"No, I'll not impose upon your hospitality, thank you." Weston declined a conventional invitation to dinner. "I only wished to ex-

press my debt to you, Colonel, as well as to Miss Langdon, for my ride."

"And we're going to ride every morning, father!"

The Adviser noticed the eagerness in her voice.

"Well, that's a pretty stiff program," he said gently.

With a word Barrie left. Helen skipped to her "Pavilion" which stood, screened by flowering trees and a rockery, at one side of the path.

"Oh, Ancient Breasts!" She nearly bowled over the bound-footed woman who hobbled out to greet her, "I've had such a glorious day!"

The old *amah* flung a deprecating gesture in the direction of the departing Weston. "Oh, you mustn't be jealous," Helen laughed, pushing her indoors. "I shall always love you and father—and Red Arrow!"

Langdon, watching and hearing, was walking slowly up and down the veranda stroking his chin. "That young American has quite taken her fancy," he mused. "Of course he's all right—introduced by his Minister and all that. An able chap, if I read him rightly.

Still—a journalist!" He became even more thoughtful. "He must be in pretty close confidence of that student-patriot lot to write what he does. There'll be no harm in having him around here a bit . . ." Suddenly he called: "Oh, Toots, ready for dinner, old girl?"

Helen came proudly up the path in a vivid orange gown, her face alight. Arm in arm they crossed the lawn to the dining hall.

Before a tiny court on Sweet Rain Hutung, farther to the north of the East City, Weston turned his jaded mount over to the grizzled, blue-gowned gateman who stood at attention in the faded red entry-way. The young American had begun to take great comfort in the old man's deferential and meticulous service. From the latter's side a huge dog, with a head like a panther's and a body resembling a boar's, bounded forward, closing his great jaws playfully around Weston's leg.

"Down, Mengo, down!" he commanded. "Here's a board. Chew that!"

The big fellow, wagging clumsily with joy, began to demolish the two-inch plank offered him.

"Elderborn," suggested the old *kanmendy* wryly, "if you could teach that brother etiquette, you would need no other gate servant!"

"But who would put up my horse, Lau Dah?" Weston indicated the waiting animal meaningly.

"You are right, Master Way." The porter edged toward the horse. "I would beg words with you on my return. A letter was left with despicable one for Elderborn." He lifted his gown and produced from his girdle a Chinese envelope with the address written down the red band running the length of its face.

Barrie perused it curiously. "I will receive your words in the straight chamber."

He stepped first into the lattice fronted side room and began pulling off his things. *"Sheeow Ba!"* he called.

His household staff, in the shape of one shaven-headed youth, emerged from the kitchen on the opposite side. "Yes, Ancient?"

"Little Eight, run to the hot water shop and buy me a bath." The boy went out with carrying-pole and wooden buckets. Weston

slipped on a Japanese bath kimono and went to his "drawing room" which ran across the end of the court. Dropping into a rug-covered divan he tore open the envelope. It contained a brief note, written with a hair pen in large copy-book English.

"Foreign Elderborn": he read, "The hearts of the students and Patriots burst with gratitude at your sincere sympathy. You have deigned to notice them in their need, and they will not forget you in their triumph. The hour may soon come when your assistance will be sought in a great matter. That your warm heart and comprehending liver will extend to us at that time we doubt not. May you be like the Ancient Heroes, George Washington and Djang Fay. The Little Chairman of the Inner Committee of Students and Patriots abashedly petitions the Foreign Bigness."

Weston smiled. "There'll be something doing soon, I take it," he muttered. "Well, I'm with 'em, if that helps them any. Queer signature, that—'The Little Chairman!' It looks almost like a girl's handwriting! But all these Chinese write English so meticu-

lously." He put the message back in its envelope and tossed it on a long Chinese table which served as his desk.

Lau Dah came to the door, crooked one knee, touched the tips of his fingers to the ground, and entered. "Foreign Elderborn, lowly one ashamedly begs permission to leave your much too exalted service."

"What, Lau Dah! Shall I raise you to twelve dollars a month?"

"No, Bigness, despicable one's services are already overpaid. Yet they must terminate."

"And the dog, I suppose, will look after the place."

"I have provided better than that, Ancientness. My elder brother's second wife's cousin will take over the gate tonight, and not so much as a cockroach shall pass it without your authority. Petitioning one is ashamed to have aspired to hold the post in comparison."

"Well, I'll be damned!"

Lau Dah courtesied again. "Ancientness is thanked, although the weighty foreign words of his magnanimous assent are not comprehended by this cabbage head. Will Bigness grant one more favor?"

"What is it?"

"The overwhelming goodness of an honorable foreign letter of recommendation."

Biting his pipe-stem hard, Weston flung himself into his chair and began in the conventional manner.

"To whom it may concern:

"This man has been in my employ as gateman and has been honest, courteous, and diligent. Having demonstrated his ability to care for a 'foreign gate' he is looking, I suppose, for a grander portal than mine to watch. I have only one objection to him, and it is that he is quitting me."

With a deep, apologetic courtesy which in spite of his growing sophistication in things Chinese, conveyed to Weston an impression of sincerity, Lau Dah took it.

"We meet again, ancient Master. You will forgive me!"

II

GARDEN-PARTY: HELEN

AUTUMN had come by Friday.

In the blue twilight of that perfect season in Peking, a number of rickshaws, a dozen carriages and several automobiles made their way between the open air shops of South Small Street into the alley known even to rickshaw coolies as "Adviser Lang's Hutung." Here, before the red lacquered doors, they discharged their passengers —foreigners in the black and white suits or soft-colored silk gowns of semi-formal evening dress.

"What! Is *this* where you have taken service?" asked Barrie Weston of the grizzled gateman who received the guests.

Lau Dah bowed placidly and respectfully. "Your Excellency's letter is to be thanked," he murmured, smiling.

"What a title!" laughed the American. "The trend these days, is to abolish 'Excellencies,' I think, Lau Dah."

"The young and rabid among us do talk so. But there will always be Excellencies, Master Ba-lee," returned the gateman soberly, partly out of Chinese courtesy, and partly out of five thousand years of race experience.

"All right, old friend. How much am I to pay for this new honor?"

Other guests were brushing past. The scent from the garden came out into the *hu-tung* and vied with the smells of frying mutton, fresh peanut oil and varnish from coffin-shops.

"I speak not mere guest-air, Honorable Well-baked Sir. If you do not soon become an Excellency in truth, I mistake the feelings of the Patriots' Committee toward you."

The American's face turned grave. "*Lee'oo sin*—Place the heart!" he cautioned, glancing about and stepping into the doorway of the gatehouse. "Some of these fellow foreigners speak Chinese. Ancient Big, apparently you are on the inside of this business. Since you left me I have heard nothing."

"The Portuguese Minister's automobile arrives. Loiter a moment in the shadow there. . . . Now, two phrases! Foreign friend of our people, the Little Chairman has permitted me to confide to you. I, one of the stupid surnames, who nevertheless loves his country, was commissioned to report on your trustworthiness and sincerity. No one but a gateman, Foreign Elderborn, can completely know his master's affairs. The Little Chairman and the Committee are fully satisfied as to you." Weston looked his amazement. "Greatness will pardon the impertinence! But I was commanded to transfer my watch to the Wolf. With sorrow I left your service, magnanimous master."

"The Wolf?"

Lau Dah gestured toward the interior of the compound. "The Patriots fear him! They cannot tell his feelings towards them. They do not know how he will influence the President."

Lang is "wolf" in Chinese. Weston grasped the word play and its implication.

"But how did you get so fortuitously into the Adviser's service?"

"Paid his gateman to quit and recommend me. The Adviser had to have an experienced man for tonight. Your letter served in the crisis."

Weston frowned. "I don't like the way you're involving me in this!"

"Heart and Foot Friend of our nation." Lau Dah reached out his hand, "I beg you, trust to our gratitude. You know I am but the servant of the Committee—I who am not a student with the wisdom of the new learning but merely a bitter exerter (coolie), who likewise loves his country. Nevertheless in regard to you I dare speak for the Committee. Your help, when certain persons tried to have our organization outlawed by representing it to the Diplomatic Corps as a revival of the Boxers, is not forgotten. We now hope that through you the American Minister will become our friend. The Little Chairman asks regarding you frequently. Only today I was told to keep in touch with you this night. I am to confide to you:" he lowered his voice, "tonight the Patriots act! You know that a treaty is being made to sell our country to

Japan. Tonight we execute our plan to expose the traitors."

"But Lau Dah—where—who—?"

Lau Dah stopped him with his hand, palm forward. "Words must be saved now. We fear only the Wolf."

"Kanmendy!" interrupted the voice of a guest.

The gateman jumped to the threshold, leaving Weston digging for pockets that do not exist in tropical dress suits of British invention. In the entry-way a squat, clipped-headed Dutchman with pointed mustache, stand-up collar, white coat and black trousers, was arguing with a rickshaw coolie, his cane raised threateningly. *"Kanmendy,—* gateman!" he bellowed as Lau Dah came between them, "take this twenty cents and pay this fellow! If he complains any more keep the money and beat him away from here." He turned and saw Weston against the gatehouse. "Hullo, my American friend! Coming alone, too, eh? Let's go in together!" He reached out and took the other in tow.

A little way up the path Weston seized an opportunity to turn the *bon-vivant* Dutchman

over to another guest. Then he stopped, debating a return to the gatehouse, but saw Lau Dah very busy there. He went slowly and meditatively up the edge of the sanded walk in the shadow of the palm ferns and dwarf maples. The Wolf!—Colonel Langdon was a splendid-appearing fellow. A British officer with a long colonial career, a sportsman and horse lover, a commanding figure everywhere respected and flattered—Helen's father—was he a man to uphold traitors? No, Weston felt certain he was not, unless it be through some misunderstanding.

He passed around the huge spirit-screen, with its porcelain-mosaic "dragon swallowing the sun," into the heart of the garden. He had learned that at functions like this in Peking guests are received by the servants and pay their respects to the host and hostess only on departing. There was no reason to hurry toward the pavilion—Helen would be too busy for him yet.

Beside the path a fountain played on a large basin containing goldfish. Filmy multiple tails flashed under the lights placed about the basin. Like brides decked out in their

veils! Why couldn't there be goldfish like that in America, and brides decked out in red instead of white? How right the Chinese are in choosing red for joy, he thought. Four lines of a poem ran through his mind:

"I am the color of audacity,
The pulse of all things riotous and fleet.
A deal of me and you have carnival:
A little—and the heart must skip a beat!"

The basin drained into a second filled with lotus. The flowers lay reposedly on the black water, their flesh-pink blossoms still visible in the gloaming. Beyond was a rockery, every cranny of it supporting a flowering shrub in a riot of bloom. A *moodan* tree bore blossoms ten inches across, appraised by some of the guests for their rose-delicate beauty, and by others for the ten dollars per blossom they might bring in the Dragon-temple flower market. According to the folk-tale, they were the flowery reincarnation of a too seductive fairy. But what was that colorful thing beyond the *moodan?*

"Helen!" exclaimed Barrie, approaching.

She stood waiting for him, her classic features accentuated under the pink glow of a Japanese lantern. Her hands were buried in an iridescent silk wrap which fell gracefully over a plain jet-black gown.

"Barrie!" She welcomed him joyously. "I had begun to fear you would not come!"

"I came to see you," he said quietly.

Her eyes, meeting his, became suffused with happiness.

"Oh, I know you detest these affairs, Barrie," she said swiftly. "Don't pretend! But now that you're here you must come and show yourself to father at once. I bet him you'd come!"

"A bet about my coming? Ridiculous!" He clasped her hand, looking into her eyes.

"Yes, Barrie. When we spoke of you at dinner tonight father said: 'I'll wager he won't be present.' So I made the bet with him. He wouldn't tell me why he said that, but he mumbled something about your 'connection with those meddlesome students' which would probably keep you busy tonight."

He was silent.

"What did he mean, Barrie?"

"I am wondering! My only connection with

the students is that I have defended them in the foreign press. Anyone with sympathy and conscience would do as much. Why should he have said that!"

Helen withdrew her hand from his to finger a necklace of many stranded seed-pearls.

"Oh, Barrie, I know nothing about these matters," she replied in a sweet concerned voice. "But I have heard persons remark: 'Weston is in with that student gang.' I know father feels it is not well for a foreigner to be so much concerned in these Chinese intrigues. Barrie, I can't help but think that it is dangerous for you! You aren't angry with me for being worried, are you?"

Her frank confession of her regard for him induced a momentary flush of exultation in Weston. But instead of following it up with eagerness he stood perplexed and silent.

Why should Colonel Langdon be concerned over his friendship with the Chinese students? And why assume he would not be present tonight? "Tonight the Patriots act!" Lau Dah had said. Did Langdon know that? Barrie felt he must talk with Lau Dah further.

"Helen, I must leave you a moment—" He

broke an awkward silence. "I didn't dismiss my rickshaw man."

"Are you *really* resigning yourself to a stay for the evening, Barrie?" Her eyes twinkled. "Right! I shall wait for you here."

Weston went out and paid off his runner, who had settled for a nap in the floor of the rickshaw. Then he stepped quietly into the gatehouse and beckoned to his one-time concierge. "What were you about to tell me, Lau Dah? Are the students really executing a *coup* tonight?"

Lau Dah came close and cupped his hand to his mouth.

"They plan to occupy the Foreign Office and extort the traitorous treaty by force from the Foreign Minister, Elderborn."

"Leeow-day!" ("It is committed!") Weston had acquired the expressive Chinese interjections. "And what then?"

"Elderborn, you are aware that this treaty provides that our country be sold into the hands of Japan." Lau Dah lowered his voice. "The students will publish the treaty as evidence in the papers, and appeal to the President and the populace to eject the traitors in

the Cabinet who have been sponsoring such infamy!"

Weston gazed at him. Lau Dah was unconcernedly calm, save for the fire in his eyes.

"Of the populace there is little doubt, provided you get the proof. But what of the President and his gendarmes?"

"Like enough 'Old Grandfather' will defer to his foreign Adviser." The gateman pointed his nose significantly toward the curving roofs of Langdon's "Treasury," which showed dimly through the garden foliage.

Weston's hands fumbled nervously once more for the missing pockets.

"What advice do you expect the Adviser to give?"

Lau Dah slapped his skirted thighs in the Chinese gesture of helplessness. "We divine not, except that he will plan to find profit for himself. That is always his way. Have you, Elderborn, an idea as to which way his advantage lies?"

"I am alike in ignorance, Great Brother. But I think the Adviser is aware that something is happening tonight!"

Lau Dah threw out his hands. "Do you think so? I, also. Yet he gives a garden party! Is he, then, taking pains to have it appear he is unaware? Elderborn, the Wolf has some strategy, whether favorable to us I know not. But I fear him!"

Someone called at the gate. Weston turned slowly back up the path.

"How long you were, Barrie!" Helen's eyes reproached him as she took his proffered arm. "Father will be wondering what has become of me. I am sure this is going to be the best party of the year. The British Minister, the Countess Tartova — simply everybody — is here!"

Weston had never seen her more lovely. She aroused something deep in him, something strange and exultant. But as they walked up the garden path, other things compelled his thoughts from the pleasure of being beside her. Soon there might be strife . . . bloodshed. Perhaps a nation's destiny hung in the balance. Shimmering gowns, swinging lanterns, light talk—all those seemed grotesque tonight.

But Helen's thoughts had turned from the

politics and intrigue of the Chinese capital to a matter much more dear to a girl's heart. She wished to show all foreign Peking, this night, that Weston was her choice.

They reached the lawn surrounding the buildings. Some of the guests were strolling about chatting, others were already seating themselves at little tables. The men, as always after sundown in the Orient, were hatless.

A short, dark man with a large moustache came toward them. "Our Minister," whispered Helen, touching Barrie's arm. Of course we have to *kotow* to him and father says he is very amenable to advice." The Minister bowed stiffly to Helen. She introduced him formally.

"His Excellency, the British Minister: Mr. Weston, the American correspondent who arrived while Your Excellency was away for the summer."

"I left a card, Excellency," said Weston. "I was anxious to interview you about Chinese poppy growing."

"You must forgive me, Mr. Weston. There were so many cards when I got back. I should be glad to give you material any time." He bowed politely and passed on.

Barrie chuckled. "That gets him. He is keen to have Chinese poppy growing advertised. Perhaps there is a reason. . . ." But Helen was not listening.

"Here is someone else you must meet," she said, guiding him through the throng. "Count Porgnoff, President-Director of the Chinese Northern Railway, may I present my friend Mr. Weston?"

Count Porgnoff was a stubby little man, with bleary close-set eyes divided by a deep crevice in his forehead. Under his white coat he wore the sash of some abolished Russian order of merit, and the Japanese decoration of the Rising Sun. He bowed low and kissed Helen's hand.

Yet this was the man, Weston recalled, looking back at him as they passed on, who was rumored to have sold the Russian share in the road to Japan, and who had policed the line with Japanese guards. These, several divisions strong, now awaited orders to pounce down upon Peking.

They approached a tall, handsome Italian who was chatting alternately in his own language, French and English with several lega-

tion attachés. Helen introduced him as Chevalier Musoni, who had won the famous ship litigation for China.

"I have heard of your brilliant conduct of the case, Chevalier," bowed Weston, somewhat ironically. There had been more in that case than met the eye.

Just then the Italian Minister himself came up. "What good spirits our young hostess is in tonight!" he cried jovially. "Ah, Signorina whom have you this time? Mr. Weston! A pleasure indeed! American? You prefer Americans, Signorina! And you have added many things to your garden. That pool—is it not new? And the fountain? I must bring you a figurine I have from Florence for it. So many months I have not been here—in the summer the Chinese always fight, and they keep me so busy!" He shrugged in self-depreciation and bustled off.

"Is that one of your celebrities?" asked Weston, trying to put Lau Dah and the students out of mind as he indicated a huge, rugged man whose head almost touched the lanterns.

"There by the rockery? Yes, indeed!

Father says he is the biggest man in Peking because he holds the purse strings. That is Sir Chesney Cartright, Inspector General of the Tariff Bureau. The government has to ask his permission before it can build a railroad, put down a revolution, or buy a ream of paper on credit. I have heard father say that if it were not for him China would have gone bankrupt and been divided among its creditors long ago."

"So that's Sir Chesney!" murmured Weston, staring hard.

"And here are the Japanese," Helen continued, leading him to a group admiring the *moodan* flowers. "Your Excellency Minister Takasaki, may I present my American friend, Mr. Weston."

"Weston! Ah, ffst—I believe I have seen some of Mr. Weston's writings." Whereupon the Minister, ignoring Helen, began politics at once in jerky English. "You Americans are strong champions of China's sovereignty, is it not? We Japanese, too. It is good that our two friendly nations stand together to help the Chinese people." But Weston, knowing that

this was the man who had actually been plotting with the traitors in the Foreign Office, could scarcely repress a sardonic smile.

At another time, perhaps, he would have found a thrill of adventure in these personal introductions to some of the famous personages with whom his duties were to bring him into contact. But tonight he hated them all. "Leeches—almost every one—drawing wealth and glory from the wounds of a bleeding nation!" he thought bitterly.

"Now, Barrie, you have one more ordeal," said Helen. "You must come and be presented to the ladies of the capital. You may find them even more interesting. See, there they are in the palm arbor—and that huge mass in the middle is Countess Tartova. She doesn't look very attractive but she is undisputed head of the social set. Although she doesn't care what she says, she is really a sweet and lovable old thing."

The Countess, gowned in silver lace which made her look like a balloon in its captive netting, was alternately sipping a whiskey-soda and recounting the latest scandal to an eager and amused crowd of women.

"Yes! Zee self-complacent Hammondsby. Zat beeg fat one! Under zee bed! Sir Roderick, he come home at onusual time. Zee *amah* she tell my *amah,* Sir Roderick veree surprised!" She shrugged her fat shoulders.

Her audience laughed. "So that's why we haven't seen them together all week at the club!" exclaimed a highly-rouged, thin-faced little brunette, evidently American. "Hammondsby sits on one porch and Sir Roderick's lady on another."

"Well, a man who snoops under his wife's bed ought to get a shock," retorted a rather pretty blonde, with a basso voice.

"And Madam Selby—have you heard about her?" continued the Countess. "She ees veree angry at her writer man. He come back from Australia thees week breenging with heem a wife! Zee Madam, she go to the station to meet heem, veree excite. Now she will not speek."

The ladies all leaned forward in rapt attention.

"But I haff heard anozzer." The Countess went on. She lowered her voice and her auditors drew nearer. "Temple party—Capi-

tane Brayo's temple—you know, in zee West' Hills! Capitane and Madam take Portuguese First Secretary who like Madam—*you* know! Zee Madam drink too much—husban' veree angry, take motor car to go back city. Poor Portuguese Secretary-man go Chinese village and find donkey cart to take Madam home. Early morning time they come to city gate. Chinese guard ask passes. Portuguese Secretary telephone hees legation to arrange for heem. Chinese police capitane telephone Madam Brayo's Legation for her. Legation Number One Boy answer no can be Madam Brayo—Capitane and Madam long time ago home!" She lifted her eyebrows.

Another laugh went around the circle. Helen, full of her own happy thoughts and impatiently waiting for an opportunity to present her lover, had scarcely heard their conversation. "Barrie," she said, "let's interrupt them now."

But he stepped back.

"Barrie! What's the matter?"

"Helen, will you excuse me?" He seemed terribly in earnest. "I must leave you now—

really! Something serious is going on, something more important than I can tell you. I *must* go!"

His manner frightened her. She looked at him in amazement, her disappointment almost too great to bear.

"What is it?" she cried. "Can't you tell me? You're cruel, Barrie!"

"I know I am!" he said miserably. "Please be patient! I'll explain in the morning. I'll bring the horses early and meet you at your gate. Will you tell your father I've had to go?"

"Oh, Barrie! . . ." Her lips quivered. Suddenly, with a little cry, she fled into the shadows.

Blankly Weston watched her go. His impulse was to rush after her. Instead, after a moment, he moved toward the gate, and as he stepped over the threshold he saw Lau Dah alighting from a rickshaw.

"Fortune of the stars!" exclaimed the latter, clutching at the American's sleeve. "I came to seek you, Elderborn! I have just been to the Foreign Office. The students are

holding the Foreign Minister and have forced that cowardly traitor to deliver up the secret treaty with the foreigners!"

"*Lee-ow day!* Did they meet no resistance from his guards?"

"Why should our own men resist us?" Lau Dah flung out his hands eloquently. "When the money-loving Minister sold the posts, we bought them. But the Hundred Surnames will soon discover what has happened. The students have allowed the Minister to send a message to the President, despatching their own representative with him to present their side of the affair. In a few minutes His Excellency Langdon will doubtless be summoned to the palace. Do you think he might be persuaded to side with us? Elder Brother, the Little Chairman sends me to you!"

"If we could show him the proof—but how can I convince him?"

"I have it here!" said Lau Dah, glancing about. He pulled a parchment from his padded bosom. "It is the treaty made by the traitors in the Foreign Office, to sell our country to Japan!"

Weston reached for it.

"Good! Show it to him, Elderborn! But pledge not to let it leave your sight! And return quickly! It is our justification—and it incriminates others besides the Minister!"

"I'll take care of it. I am very uncertain of results, but I will try at once. Wait here."

Nervously Weston returned through the garden, examining the document as he went. As yet he had learned but few of the characters. "'*Jwin-dway-wai gwan*—what's this!—Japanese officers for the army!—'*Ts'u sung gway zjih*'—this province to go to Japan!—if I could only have an hour with my dictionary!—But Langdon is an expert. He will take it in at a glance."

"Where is the Adviser?" Weston asked, stopping a servant who was carrying a lacquered tray of wine glasses.

"Big Man is in the 'Treasury.'"

Weston hurried thither. The door was ajar and he entered, to behold a room as distinguished as its owner. Its immense length was broken by huge red-lacquered pillars half embedded in the walls. The intervals between them, except for the long, low-latticed windows, were hung with brown and grey goat's

hair tapestries woven in bamboo designs. The stone-flagged floor was hidden by thick amber-colored straw mats, upon which lay huge blue hand-woven rugs half an inch thick. Sinking deep into the rugs stood heavily-carved black-wood, teak, mahogany and ivory tables, bearing ox-blood porcelains in an artistic arrangement. There were also carvings in crystal, amber and jade, and multi-colored cloisonné. In the center of the room opposite the door stood a huge vase constructed of cloisonné-work laid on a glowing red-gold background, with blue turquoises set in the rim. In the rear of the hall, next to a small door, was a large niche fitted with a luxurious divan which gave the impression of being as deep as the sky and as billowy as a cloud. A canopy of cloth-of-gold and silver overhung it. From the center was suspended a lamp shaded by a huge opal.

Several ladies sat deep in the divan, while Colonel Langdon stood before them exhibiting animatedly some Han burial figurines. He looked up to see Weston approaching embarrassedly, holding out the document.

"Well, young man!" he said cordially,

"Pleased to see you here! But have you come to my party with your lessons in your hand? Ladies," he went on, turning to the women, "let me present the most indefatigable young student in Peking!"

"I beg your pardon—and that of the ladies," said Weston. "But I have something here that demands the attention of a real scholar, not a *griffin* like myself. Might I speak to you at once?"

"Can't it keep till after the party?" The older man glanced amusedly at the rest of the company. "We learn in the East never to interrupt pleasure for work."

"It's not a mere matter of work, Colonel Langdon." Weston's voice was polite but insistent. "I must talk with you at once."

His manner impressed the Adviser, who excused himself and led Weston by the arm through a door at the side of the divan. They entered a small study crowded with Chinese dictionaries on racks. The far wall was hung with large-charactered scrolls and gilded banner-boards of eulogy which left space only for a tiny door leading to something beyond.

"Well, sir, what's troubling you?"

In answer, Weston handed the Adviser the document.

For five minutes Langdon perused it silently. Weston saw his thin nostrils dilate—his eyes narrow. Then he arose, grasping the parchment tightly. "Where did you get this?" he demanded abruptly.

"It was brought to me at your gate here, sir. The students have just extorted it from the Minister of Foreign Affairs. It has been left with me only for a few minutes."

"So you are the students' foreign confidant!" Langdon's manner was noncommittal, but Weston again experienced a sensation of uneasiness, aroused by the other's eyes. "Do you believe this to be authentic?"

"That is the Minister's signature, is it not?" said Weston, indicating the scrawl. "It lacks the President's seal but it is on government parchment."

Langdon sat down and perused it again, his right fingers drumming the desk.

"I can tell you this much—it is not known in the President's palace," he said finally, studying Weston's face, "but the Foreign Minister has been granted a rather free hand in these

foreign negotiations. I have not been taken into confidence." He smiled rather wryly.

"Is it as brazen a sale as the students represent?"

"I cannot say. I must study it a bit. It is full of geographical names in the classical manner, some of which are not familiar to me. Can you leave me a moment with my books?"

"May I wait here while you work at it, Colonel?" asked Weston, remembering his injunctions. "Meanwhile, I venture to hope it will convince you of the necessity of the students' action. It is their justification, you see."

The Adviser shrugged his shoulders. He was about to speak, when the door opened. Helen, finishing a remark to somebody outside, stepped into the room.

"Barrie!" She stopped in confusion. "I thought you—" Words failed her. Head high, she turned swiftly and went out, closing the door quietly behind her.

Weston, embarrassed, turned back to the Adviser. "I pledged myself not to let the document out of my sight—" he said lamely.

There was a twinkle in the older man's eyes.

"Go and settle matters with the girl," he advised. "I'll guard your document until you return." Somehow there was a hint of command in his tone.

Weston hesitated a moment, then smiled. "All right—with thanks—I'll join you again here."

As he opened the door he saw Langdon resume intense perusal of the document. His fingers were reaching for a pencil. Weston went out, struggling with a vague doubt. Whatever Langdon's politics, he assured himself, the Adviser was a gentleman. Surely there was nothing to fear.

He glanced quickly about the Treasury. Helen was not in the room. Stepping out on the portico he saw her, in her glistening silk wrap, going down the path toward the lotus pool. He hurried after her, trying not to attract attention. Even then, he knocked a sandwich out of a lady's hand and almost upset a tray of glasses.

Helen was looking into the pool when he reached her side. She did not turn.

"Helen." He took her hand gently. "I had

to change my mind and go to your father. I believe I was being of service to him."

"But why couldn't you have been frank with me from the beginning?" she asked, facing him. "Couldn't you trust me, Barrie?"

"Of course! I'll explain the best I can—briefly—for I must get back! There is violence, revolution, perhaps bloodshed, in the city tonight! I heard of it on the way to your party here. Then as I was leaving your compound a few minutes ago a document, taken from the Minister of Foreign Affairs, was placed in my hands. I brought it to your father. But I am pledged not to let it out of my sight. That is why I must get back!"

Her eyes widened. "Oh, Barrie, this *is* exciting! Let us speak low so as not to alarm the guests. I had a presentiment of something. Is it the students?"

"Yes, the organization known as the Patriots. Led by a mysterious individual called the Little Chairman of the Inner Committee, they have captured the Foreign Minister, and are holding him in his own offices."

Weston kept glancing nervously at the

Treasury. Suddenly he was startled to see a little bent man in scholar's dress come out and shuffle away across the lawn.

"I didn't know there was a Chinese in there!" he exclaimed. "Who was it, Helen?"

"That's father's writer," she whispered. "He's no ornament but he can write character as fast as father can dictate. Now tell me, Barrie, what is the document? I'm dying to know!"

"They say it's a pact to sell the nation to a foreign power. I left your father reading it. He will know by now. They hope it will bring him over to their side."

"Oh, I hope it will change his attitude! But Barrie, promise me you won't get any deeper into this. I am so afraid for you! Is it very dangerous?" She caressed his sleeve gently.

His reply was interrupted by an unearthly screech which rose from the *hutung* and floated over the garden.

"The President's car!" bawled Lau Dah in the proverbial "voice that could be heard between mountains."

A liveried *ting-chai* ran to the "Treasury." Weston and Helen followed him. Guests,

gathering before the portico as fast as decorum would permit, blocked their way.

In a moment Adviser Langdon emerged. With unhurried dignity he waved his guests aside and came to Weston and Helen, the parchment extended in his hand. Barrie took it with evident relief.

"I thank you very much indeed, Weston," Langdon said in a rapid, confidential way. "I had a rough copy made for the President. I cannot comment on the document now, but I advise you to get it published as speedily as possible. The students will need public sentiment to support them in such a drastic measure. You might get it into one of the morning papers. A censorship will undoubtedly be clapped on tomorrow. Goodnight."

He turned to Helen. "Toots, will you explain my departure to the guests? This is entirely unexpected and deplorable. I'll likely remain at the palace for the night."

The crowd followed him to the gate. With a parting nod he entered the motor car and was shut in by a liveried chauffeur. Three uniformed guards took places on either running board. To the accompaniment of the in-

cessant horn and six police whistles the car bounded out of the narrow *hutung*.

The guests came crowding around Helen and her escort.

"What ees it? Oh, I am so excite! Tilly, my dear, hold me up—zat's ver' sweet boy!" Countess Tartova was in her element.

"I must go too, Helen," said Weston, grasping her hand. "You understand now about my actions tonight, don't you?"

"That's all explained, Barrie! But stay out of danger—*do* promise me that!"

"I promise. You are sweet to worry about me so. Tomorrow morning, then?"

"Yes, Barrie. Tomorrow morning!"

Weston contrived to nudge Lau Dah as he went out. The gateman followed down the *hutung* into safe darkness. "Did Lang Dahren see the document?" he asked anxiously, as Weston stopped.

"Yes, and took a copy. He seemed favorably impressed. The thing to do now is to get this into the newspapers."

"*Boo tso!* You are wise, Elderborn."

"Quick, then. Find me a rickshaw, Lau Dah."

III

RAMPARTS: MOONLADY

WESTON sped to the office of the *Peking World* on Lump Coal Alley. Fronting the street, in the kitchen and servants' quarters of what had been a noble domicile, natives in loin cloths, bodies smeared with ink, were operating hand power presses. Others were setting in "sticks" types snatched from the fingers of scurrying "devils" who, as the head composer called out the characters, fetched them from the several thousand compartments of surrounding type cases.

Weston crossed a brick-paved court. Before a littered table, in the former women's apartments, sat his editor acquaintance, the goggle-eyed Chew.

"Here is meat for you!"

Chew unfolded the parchment and scanned it through, then looked at Weston through his

thick glasses. "There must be more than this! The students have not given you their real find."

Weston regarded Chew in surprise. It occurred to him that the editor was sounding him to make sure nothing was held back.

"This is what they wanted the President's Adviser to see," he assured. "It's live enough stuff, I should say!"

"Well, important enough," the Chinese editor grunted, with a strange, insinuating smile. He rose. "Boy, stop the presses."

"Have you an English translator here?" queried Weston.

"Yes. A very adept fellow."

"Would you favor me by having an English draft made and sent to your English language contemporary? They do not go to press until midnight over there."

"*Koy-ee.* If you get anything more, bring it in."

"Thanks."

Weston emerged to find the *hutungs* full of marching gendarmes. Would they attack the students, or, in the usual Chinese fashion, recognize and uphold the *fait accompli?*

He urged his rickshaw-puller past the marching columns to Foreign Office Street. A flare of weird light guided him to the district. As he approached he saw thousands of paper lanterns supported by slender bamboos dancing above a sea of cadet caps. He made out the slogans splashed in red characters on their sides:

"UNION OF STUDENTS AND PATRIOTS!"

"COUNTRY-SELLERS, DOWN!"

"SAVE OUR COUNTRY!"

"DEATH BEFORE BONDAGE!"

"WE WANT OUR LOST PROVINCE!"

Along the street in the direction of the city wall swayed a battalion of girl students in bobbed hair, tight jackets and short trousers. Weston smiled at this aggregation—the student body of the Girls' Normal—which best represented "flapperism" in Cathay's capital.

A crowd of artisans, coolies, merchants, clerks and mothers-in-law stood about, reaching out of the lighted area into every street and

courtyard and *hutung*. Here and there young men standing in rickshaws or on other convenient means of elevation, harangued those around them. An occasional cheer broke out. Street venders, more alive to opportunity than an American insurance salesman, pushed through the crowd with Chinese fried "twisters," cigarettes, watermelon seeds, and hot water simmering on charcoal stoves made of Standard Oil tins—all swung at the ends of shoulder poles.

Weston descended from his vehicle and wormed through the milling crowd to the great gates of the Foreign Office compound. Standing sentry were several boy scouts of a middle school brigade, in the tan and bare knee style imported from the west, armed with their scout pikes.

"American or English?" demanded an alert youngster, barring his way.

"He's American," said a comrade. "I know foreigners. Am I right?" he demanded.

"Ee ding!" agreed Weston.

"You see, I can tell! Americans are our friends. Raise your pike."

Weston went into the gardens. At the end

of a hedge-lined drive stood the massive granite structure of the Foreign Office—built by a German architect in copy of something in Berlin. Several hundred students in cadet uniform but unarmed were drawn up in military fashion before the buildings.

Weston was walking toward the offices when a cry: "the gendarmes are coming!" arose in the street. He rushed back to the gate. Leaders among the students were pressing to the van.

"The gendarmes!" they shouted. "Our friends! Join us in saving our country!"

The answer was a sharp command.

"They are charging! Look out!" shouted a boy throwing his banner in the air.

Bayonets flashed in the lantern light.

"Spring at them, the beasts!" cried a lad, leaping up and gesticulating wildly.

With shrill imprecations of fury the braver among the crowd followed him. Climbing over fear-paralyzed persons who stood in their way, they rushed directly to impalement. It was not a pleasant sight. The victims remained on their feet a minute, heads falling forward, tongues dropping out, red blotches suddenly

showing on the blue blouses. The soldiers disentangled their knives and charged again.

"Flee, flee!" sobbed a terror stricken youth in front of Weston, almost pushing him over.

Lanterns crashed to the ground and went out. From the rear of the crowd came the screams of girls. Weston surmised that the knives would soon turn and cut their way through the archway of the gate where he stood. He pushed his way back onto the open lawn.

Across the official compound, he recalled, was a small rear gate. He reached it, urged the boys guarding it to flee, and ran up the short *hutung* on which it opened to the city wall. A convenient ramp made it possible for him to mount. Guards, listening excitedly to the tumult now coming from Foreign Office Street, scarcely noticed him.

Under a willow bush sprouting from a crack in the paved top of the wall, Weston sat and shivered at the cries that rose from the *hutungs* fifty feet below. His blood boiled. Upon whose orders had the gendarmes acted with such untoward cruelty? Probably Langdon had failed to reach the President in time.

Tomorrow would surely bring revenge from a populace which normally hated severity. The morning's newspapers would proclaim to the peoples the proof of their government's treachery, and the nation would make heroes of the students for the disclosure in spite of the irregular manner in which it had been made.

Thus he sat quieting his over-strained nerves when the shrieks of women's voices arose from the confused mass of humanity and bobbing lights below.

"They're attacking the girls!" he murmured. He clenched his fists and started for the incline. Something inside him had given way. The futility of his indignation was apparent, but at least he might choke the life out of one brute before they bayoneted him.

But his promise to Helen! She had more claim on him than these women of an alien race. He could do nothing anyhow. He recovered himself with an effort and went back to his former seat, the perspiration breaking out on his brow.

The minutes passed. Weston's surroundings began to seem unreal to him. The ancient

wall of the city stretched to the north and south, deserted save for a few pet sheep of the guard which, like white ghosts against the sky, were browsing here, fifty feet above ground. The crenellations of the outer edge reared into the black sky like the back of a dragon. Below all was inky blackness save for the distant silhouette of a temple and a tower or two, and the nearby blotch of light from which the frantic sounds arose.

From just under his feet, in the compound next the wall, came a persistent sound. "K-klick, k-klack, k-klick, k-klack." A weaver was operating his loom in the dark, tending to business, while two blocks away his countrymen and women were being impaled on bayonets.

This was China. What business of a white man's, anyhow? What could he hope to do here?

A breeze brought faintly the discords of a jazz band. Weston turned his head slightly toward the south. High in the air—twice as high as the wall—a cluster of colored lights broke the darkness. The European commun-

ity's nightly festivities had begun on the roof garden of the Peking hotel.

"Oh, God!" he muttered helplessly.

Suddenly, from the top of the ramp, came a woman's cry. It was soon stifled to a moan. Guttural voices and a coarse laugh followed.

"The willows, there. What a charming bower for courting—ho, she struggles again! Curse these patriotic females, anyway!"

The speaker was only two feet from the edge of the wall when Weston, leaping from behind the bushes, struck him. The man reeled, clutched at a sprig and nearly regained his balance. Then the loose flagging under him gave way. His scabbard flew above his head, and he dropped, bumping and scraping against the bulging side of the ancient rampart. There was a thud and a metallic clank on the stone paving below, followed by a trickle of loose mortar and bricks.

But there was another man—an officer. For a moment he and the girl continued to struggle. Then in mutual amazement at this unexpected interference, each gave up the combat.

The soldier advanced and peered into Wes-

ton's face. "Son of a mud-turtle! A foreign monkey, too!" he exclaimed. They closed three feet from the edge of the wall. Over and over they rolled. Sometimes only the projecting bushes, sometimes the superlative effort of the one most in danger, prevented both from going over the edge. The struggle developed into a clinging match—the man on the inside not daring to push the other over without first breaking his grasp. Weston had the best of it at first. But the soldier's greater weight and size began to wear him. His breath grew short—he strained until gall was in his mouth.

Suddenly the wall, for a distance of ten feet back from the edge, gave way. Only the slight impact of the struggling men needed to be added to the weight of centuries to cause the slip of a large section of the brick-facing. They fell—but half way down, their descent suddenly stopped with a jarring impact.

Weston was caught in the débris, unable to move. His antagonist crawled out of the dust, deliberately drawing his bayonet from its sheath.

"I'm pinned—you dog!" shouted Weston in

his native tongue, desperately struggling to get free.

A miracle saved him. As the soldier raised his clumsy knife a flat paving brick was thrown from above squarely down upon his head. He went limp, rolled over, and fell the remaining distance to the ground.

Someone slid down the ragged slope of newly-exposed mud-bricks. Weston felt a delicate hand on his face.

"Elder brother," said a vibrant, soft voice. *"Dah shee 'oong."* It relapsed into Chinese. *"Shee'a, shee'a*—I thank you!"

With painful effort the girl half dragged him out and set his head in her lap. Her silken trousers, despite the lime dust, were soft to his cheek. But her caressing fingers were even softer.

"Are you hurt? *Eye-yah,* here is blood!"

His fingers cautiously explored the back of his head. There was only a scalp wound, he decided. Slowly he tried each limb. "No bones broken. All right, I guess. But you ——?"

"The brutes!" She was sobbing now. "You see they tore my jacket. But no—I'm not

hurt." She made an effort at control. "My breast girdle is tight!" Her voice rang almost triumphantly at this discovery.

"Your girdle. . . . Oh, I'm glad, little sister. . . ."

Weston smiled sympathetically as he grasped her meaning. By reference to the symbol of virginity she was assuring him that she was untouched.

"I have been saved by your light, Foreign Brother. But pity my comrades down there. They were betrayed!"

Weston had almost forgotten the battle of which his adventure was merely an eddy. He raised his head. The lights were gone. Only here and there a lantern moved, regularly, as in patrol. An occasional cry or moan reminded him of the tumult of twenty minutes before. From various quarters came the dull thud of cloth-shod troops.

"Were you with the girl students?" asked Weston.

"No indeed! I was with my Committee. We were holding the Minister prisoner in his own chamber when the soldiers came!"

"With the Committee? What did the gendarmes do?"

"They seized us and asked the traitor himself to name our fate. 'Execute them at once,' he told them. But the captain protested. 'What about the girl? We are not used to executing girls, Your Bigness.' "

Weston frowned. "A chivalrous cur, wasn't he?"

"They argued about me," the girl went on hurriedly, in a low tone. " 'You asked me what to do with them,' said the Minister. 'I say shoot them at once, including the girl. She is the most dangerous of all. She it was who demanded the treaty document.' Then he began to blaspheme. 'If I had only known you would stand by me!' he cried. 'They extorted the document from me and sent it away. Maybe you could recover it by torturing them.' The officer saluted, and turned me over to two subordinates. He ordered them to cut off my head with the rest! But the dogs would drag me here first, and now I live—thanks to you, Elder Brother, I live—the Chairman alone survives her committee!"

Weston sat up. "Are you the Little Chairman! You, a girl! Then you are the one who sent the treaty by Lau Dah to me!"

"You are Lau Dah's old master—you are our friend Way Ba-lee! Oh, I have heard much of you—" She checked herself suddenly. "But where is the document, foreign brother? Did Adviser Lang see it?"

"Yes. He saw it. It's now in a newspaper office."

"Good! Now we shall have our revenge. Lang Da-ren is evil!"

"You are hasty, little sister. Perhaps he was not able to prevent what happened."

"The man has eaten us. He is well named 'Wolf.'"

She lapsed into silence. Presently she dropped her hand, light as a snow-flake, upon his. "So you are Way Ba-lee, the foreign friend." She spoke very softly. "Yes, I have heard much of you. Your Lau Dah loves you. I—I have loved you, too, and now you have saved me, Way Ba-lee! You have travailed your magnanimous heart and your body bleeds. Oh, Way Ba-lee, may I kiss you?"

Surprised, he bent down to meet her lips

in what seemed to be the most wonderful caress he had ever known; soft as the clouds, dainty as a queen's gesture, satisfying as wine. All that was artistic in him thrilled to her charm. He could scarcely distinguish her features but he knew she was beautiful. The faint aroma of jasmine from her garments filled his nostrils.

She clasped him tightly to her. For a splendid moment he responded. He wanted terribly to be eloquent—to tell her beautifully that her danger had brought him the opportunity to intervene, without which his soul would have remained self-condemned. And he wanted to express admiration of her bravery and calm and poise. But words failed him—at least in Chinese.

"I shall return your goodness to you some day, magnanimous heart," she murmured.

Voices above brought them back to watchfulness.

". . . two officers here dragging a girl. Yes, Bigness, we guards saw them go up the ramp. They must be on top. Correct, Bigness—we will watch and take them, or anyone

else into custody—*Leeow-day!* Look, there has been a slide here!"

"Don't move! They won't search for us on the ruined portion," the girl whispered.

The voices moved on.

"We're safe now," Weston breathed, "If this loose stuff doesn't give way again."

They explored their position cautiously. Weston's movements caused him to groan with pain.

"Lie quiet, Elder Brother," begged the girl. "Let me look . . . yes, it's a short narrow ledge we're on." She peered down over the side. "I believe a wedge has broken out of the top of the wall and slipped down until its bottom rests on the ground."

"Is it possible to descend?"

"No, it is sheer!"

"Can we climb up where you slid down?"

"I think so. Shall I try?"

"Not now. We must remain here. At dawn we'll get on top and around the wall to the Legation Quarter. The barriers there are unlocked at sunrise. Can you hold out so long?" A strange tenderness filled him. He took her hand.

"*You* ask that of me who am unhurt?"

"I am not hurt—just bruised a little. I can move my limbs all right now."

"Way Ba-lee, you are brave. Put your head on my shoulder—there!"

"Then lean yours on mine—look out for the bloody spot! Maybe we can sleep a drop. . . ."

"Way Ba-lee, the city is black. What terrible things are in that blackness! I'm glad that you are here with me!"

He hugged her as encouragingly as he could with a lame arm.

"Put your head on my lap again," she said. "Now shut yours eyes and I'll watch. It's getting lighter, Way Ba-lee. I can see the trees and the roofs. . . . The moon is showing over the Western Hills."

Weston raised himself up and watched, fascinated. The black skyline of the city gradually changed to a fantastic fairy ocean with green and gold and purple and grey tiled roofs for waves and towering leafy trees for spray. The enclosure of the Imperial City became a sea of gold. Under the tinting moonlight it was almost impossible to distinguish the lakes

from the yellow roofs. The drum and bell towers rose like majestic, austere sentinels, while the dagoba on Coal Hill danced like a white fairy making mock of them.

"We call that the 'Love-moon,' " whispered the girl sadly. She gazed up at it for a moment in silence.

"I thought poets raved about a crescent rather than a gibbous moon. Why do you Chinese pick this for the Love-moon?"

The girl hesitated. "Our poets call the 'moth-eyebrow' moon a coquette, but call this moon the true loving one. They say it is rounded like the form of a waiting mother."

Weston observed it a while in silence. "Your moon seems to have very feminine connections. We say there is a man in the moon."

"*We* say there is a lady there," answered the girl.

"*Koboo!* Tell me about her," he said. It seemed safe to talk now.

"She was our country's most famous beauty —the concubine of Tang the Brilliant, who lived about 1200 years ago. Her charm was irresistible. The emperor neglected everything

for her. Finally his soldiers told him he must give her up or they would deliver him to the pursuing rebels. So she went out to a tree in the courtyard and hung herself. Her royal consort wept for her until he was blind. Then one night he was transported in a dream to the Palace of the Moon. There he found her reigning as Queen . . . he found love there too, Way Ba-lee."

"Little sister," interrupted Weston, returning to earth, "I have not learned your honorable name."

She trembled in his arms. "I have no name now. My father swore that I should be disfamilied if I joined in the demonstration tonight."

"*Leeow-day!* But what, then, is your father's name?"

"It is a great name. It would do no good to repeat it. I have been unfilial, Way Ba-lee. But he could not understand how we young people love our country!" Tears glistened on her cheeks.

Weston kissed her hands and tried to comfort her.

"What will you be called then, little sister?" he asked tenderly.

"From this night I must choose a new name. Would you bestow it?" she asked brightening. "You may rightfully do so! My life and honor belong to you."

Weston pondered. Then he said solemnly: "I hereby name you *Yüeh-neeang*—Moonlady—a democrat, a patriot, a heroine, and a princess in your own right."

"*Yüeh-neeang*—Moonlady—, then, that I shall unworthily be, kind one."

"How did you get into this, little sister?" asked Weston curiously. "I know the girls are important factors in the student agitation but I didn't expect to find one at the head of it!"

"Two phrases cannot tell, Way Ba-lee," she replied miserably. "And why ask now? The movement has come to ruin under my leadership!" She dropped her face into her hands.

"Moonlady!" he whispered. "You have suffered but your cause is not ruined. This is only the price of victory. Tomorrow you will be acclaimed!"

"Do you feel so?" she said, looking up hopefully.

"I'm sure of it. As soon as the sky behind us is light, and the newspapers are on the streets . . . after that you will have no time to talk to me, little sister. Tell me a drop about yourself now——"

"Oh, Great Brother, you ease the heart. A drop, then, if you ask. The students made insignificant sister Chairman for my acting. But I am nothing!" She threw out her hands prettily.

"You are most worthy to lead them. But what do you mean by 'acting'?"

"I was 'Loyalty' in their patriotic pageant. It was not easy. I appeared incarnated as the flood-conqueror Yü, who saved the Black-haired people from being fishes. Then, I appeared as the righteous rebel Tang, first overthrower of a wicked dynasty. Next, as the self-effacing Jo Goong, who wrote the 'Regulations' while his younger brother ruled, and who offered his life to Heaven that his brother might recover from illness. Then I had to appear as a warrior in the person of the defeated, yet heroic, Gwan Yu, now our God of War.

My next part was as the martyred Yo Fay—are you familiar with our insignificant history, foreign brother?"

"I think you must have taken me over about four thousand years! But I know your Yo Fay—he's a sort of patron saint of your movement, is he not?"

"The traitors of his day had him killed on the charge of being an egotistical disturber!" She shivered. "Then, lastly, I had to appear as a student of today sacrificing family, station, career and even love to save our nation. *Eye-yah!*" For a second her face glowed in the moonlight; then her expression became tortured: "It has all come too true, and yet the ancestral land is not saved!" Her mouth twisted in pain.

Aware of the poignancy of her grief, Weston seized her hand and pressed it hard. It was wet with tears.

"Family . . . station . . . career . . ." she repeated slowly to herself, returning his clasp. Yet even now there was something new, something thrilling, in her heart. She was trying to analyze it.

"I tell you, Moonlady—" He was assuring

himself as well as her, "tomorrow you will be acclaimed. Your family will take you back and your grand people will *kotow* at your feet. As to career—what career have you feared to lose? Not that of an actress! Surely, one of your class——"

"I had to give up that ambition, of course," she said quietly. "My exalted father promised to make me a literata instead. Naturally I couldn't think about acting after I grew up and understood how the profession is regarded by our people. I have heard that you in the western lands are less prejudiced."

"But what did your noble father say of your student play?"

"His bile fermented, Way Ba-lee! That is what turned him against the patriots' movement. Alas, I sinned! We needed professional help so I hunted up an old dramatic tutor from the south city, who used to come to father's library to examine his editions of the Ming dramas. The paternal ancestor hated him after he once caught him helping me make up a little play for my dolls. Our gate was not opened to him after that. But I never forgot him. He came to the Girls' Normal School

and coached me. Father found it out after the pageant was given, and since then I have had to meet the patriots secretly. But tonight he will know—poor father! He loves me and he has no son. He thinks I am unfilial. If he could only understand. . . ."

"Rest the heart. Tomorrow he will feel differently about it."

"Oh, you don't know him! Our success would make no difference to him. I have disobeyed."

But Barrie disagreed. He did his best to comfort her.

The chill before dawn woke them from a fitful nap.

They were a pitiful pair as, bruised and stiff, they fled furtively in the grey light around the wall to the haven of the Legation Quarter—the little citadel of foreign officialdom within the ancient capital. An American marine stood guard at the iron paling that marks off the "foreign" part of the wall. He looked very questioningly at them. But Weston was "white"—and that was the only passport required.

"You are responsible for the lady?" asked the marine, pursuing his line of duty.

"I am!" answered Barrie. They walked down the ramp where they picked up two rickshaws, conveniently left waiting at some all night party.

"Let us try your home," suggested Barrie. "I will go with you and explain to your father. Mayhap he will relent."

She was doubtful.

"Try, try—see," he said, quoting the forceful Chinese phrase.

Moonlady directed them through the paved streets of the Legation Quarter, where buildings of diverse European style slept behind their several walls, to the "South Pool" section of the Imperial City, now usually designated as "The Behind Grand Hotel." On the sloping wide avenue lined by the stone balustraded canal—down the middle of which at this time still ran the vermilion wall roofed with golden tile, which bounded off the inner city—they stopped before the door of a great establishment. Moonlady remained in her vehicle while Barrie called the gate.

"Who is it?"

"Is the Ancient Pillar in?—I have brought his daughter."

There was scurrying. After a wait, one leaf of the gate opened. A tall, finely featured Chinese in scholar's cap, velvet jacket and silk gown—all wrinkled as if he had slept in them—stepped over the high threshold and held up his left hand. His long, thin fingers were distended in the Chinese gesture of authority. The thumb and forefinger of the other held his round cap, while his long fingernails combed nervously through his whitening hair.

"You say you have brought my daughter, Foreigner?" he cried shrilly to Weston. "I have no daughter!"

He turned suddenly on the girl in the rickshaw. "You have no place here, Sprout of an Evil Day—Reincarnation of a Wanton! You are cut off from this clan and forbidden the ancestral surname. Unpropitious was the day when you were born; doubly accursed the day when I consented to your entering those breeding places of she-devils, those instigators of unfilial conduct, the new schools." He glared contemptuously an instant at Barrie. "First actors and now foreigners! A fine pre-

text for disobedience and license—your patriotic talk! Our country has existed a hundred cycles without girl-pupils to save it. You know better than to have this foreigner lead you back here. I keep my threat. Perhaps the *yang ren* will take you for his slave—you who talked so much of freedom!" He finished in a grand burst of nasal irony. Then the door was slammed and bolted.

Weston turned to Moonlady. She was white and trembling. Convulsively she took the hand he reached out to her.

For the first time he really saw her. Hers was a true beauty—especially to have been able to endure the night she had been through. Ears, pink like the inside of a sea shell, peeped from under two rolls of jet-black hair. On her brow a little forelock done in bangs, held by a red coral clasp, set off the translucent amber of her complexion. Her high forehead was relieved by tilting eyebrows with a peak and curve such as had provoked the imagination for centuries. Weston recalled the "silk-moth eyebrows" of Chinese poetry. They contrasted mischievously with her pert little dab of a nose. Above her delicate oval

chin, the pale cheeks still showed where a blush had been. The eyes—wide, dark, and frightened now—he could not look at them. But the mouth! He knew now that it was the mouth in Oriental women which attracted him. And he had kissed those fragrant, petaled lips.

"Will you come to my compound?" he asked, coming back to reality.

"I am your slave," she breathed.

The rickshaws jogged on into Sweet Rain Hutung.

IV

EAST AND WEST

HALF an hour after Weston had left her, Helen was standing on the portico of the pavilion beside a lacquered pillar, receiving the farewells of the guests. Most of the garden lanterns had gone out, but the blaze of lights in the "Treasury," shining through the intricate lattice windows, softened the shadows and made of the whole pavilion a glowing lantern. A faint breath of air caught at two or three of the gaudy little windbells dangling from the roof of the portico, setting them whirling and tinkling musically. Suddenly there was a sound of tumult in the direction of Foreign Office Street and Helen and her remaining guests hastened to the gate.

"What is it, Lau Dah?" she asked, trembling.

The gateman went down the street a little way making inquiries of those who passed. In a moment he returned, highly agitated.

"The gendarmes have knifed the students, little sister," he reported, with a descriptive gesture.

"Did Master Way go in that direction?" she demanded, in a low and anxious voice.

"He went that way, Little Missie."

The garden emptied quickly, leaving only servants struggling with glasses, plates and burned out lanterns. One by one they asked to leave. Anxiety over family and friends, or pure curiosity called them into the streets.

"Little Missie, my grandmother died last night. The big guest-inviting is over. May I——"

For the first time Helen felt unequal to the lonely command of the huge establishment.

"Go!" she waved. "Go all of you, if you will. Never mind courtesy-talk."

Only her old *amah* and the gateman stayed. She slipped off her gown and crawled into bed. Midnight passed but she could not sleep. Slowly the hours crept by. A weird minor harmony from the sky reached her ears. She

arose and threw open the lattice windows. In the grey emptiness of early dawn flocks of doves, bearing whistles on their tails, were flying.

"Ancient Breasts!" she called to the *amah,* "Arise and send the gateman to Master Way's compound."

The old nurse tottered to her side, rubbing her eyes.

"With what message, Little Missie?"

"Just to discover if he has returned. My heart hangs up, *Amah.*"

"Ah, you love him much. When you go to his home will I go with you, Little Missie?"

"If you hasten to do your errand, silly thing!" she chided, smiling.

The wizened old woman pulled down her rolled-up trousers, slipped her feet sloppily into cloth sabots, threw a shawl over her naked angular back, and went out.

She found the gatehouse deserted. In a moment, however, Lau Dah appeared, breathless.

"Do you desert your post, you child of puberty!" she scolded him angrily.

"Nay, grandmother, let us not trade names.

What are you doing, prowling through the night like an unengaged sing-song girl!"

"I bring an errand from the Little Missie," replied the old woman haughtily, not knowing whether to be outraged or flattered. "She would have you go to Master Way's."

"Which I have just done. He is not at home."

"To obey orders before they are given is clever indeed!"

"I sought him on my own account, grandmother, but my answer suffices. Return to Little Missie."

Helen's restlessness and anxiety increased at Lau Dah's report. She quit her bed and got into her riding habit. The servants had returned but not her father. She went through a round gate in the side wall to the stables.

"Little Missie," saluted the groom, "there was disturbance in the streets last night. Perhaps you had best not ride this morning."

"But if it is quenched, what danger?"

"No danger, but carcasses, Little Missie."

Her face blanched. "Did you see them, *mafoo?*"

"Yes, as I went for tea-water just now."

"There wasn't a foreigner among them?"

"Oh no, Little Missie, that could not be!"

"Saddle Red Arrow!" she cried, stamping her foot impatiently.

As the rising sun gilded the roof of the East Gate Tower and the great gong boomed out over the city—the accustomed signal for her tryst with Barrie—she cantered into Sweet Rain Hutung. Two rickshaws were jogging slowly up the narrow alley ahead of her. She overhauled them almost in front of Weston's door.

"Barrie!" she exclaimed in glad recognition, urging Red Arrow alongside his vehicle. "Oh —what has happened to you!"

"Nothing, Helen," he said, clasping the fingers that touched his blood-matted hair. "Nothing compared to what has happened to this poor child with me. She was dragged away by soldiers and barely escaped. She requires rest and attention. I'm so glad you are here. You can help!"

"He saved me, foreign lady," exclaimed the Chinese girl, endeavoring to rise to her feet as the coolie set her rickshaw down. "He needs care more than I."

Helen noted, with a quick pitying glance, the aristocratic face and dignified bearing which were in contrast to the girl's torn garments. But her attention returned to Weston.

"Barrie," she commanded, "you must have a physician to do up your head. Gateman!" to Weston's new concierge who had come out and stood gazing open-mouthed. "Go fetch doctor for Master Ba-lee!" She turned back to the rickshaw. "The Chinese girl—I'll take her with me. Oh, Barrie, you poor boy! You might have been killed! *Please* stay out of these things after this!"

"I'm sorry to have worried you, dear."

Weston turned to the Chinese girl.

"Moonlady, you will go with the foreign friend here, who will supply your needs."

"But," she said, drawing back, "you are my foreign friend. I do not know her. I wish to remain with you!"

"She is kind and good and a hand-and-heart friend of mine," he reassured her. "And able to do more for you than I."

By this time, Helen had taken command. "You will follow my horse," she said to Moonlady's rickshaw man as she mounted.

And soon the demurring girl was pulled away.

"Will I see you again, Elder Brother?" she called back to Weston.

"Yes, Moonlady, very soon. Rest your heart!"

Weston dragged himself into his courtyard, where his great-pawed Tibetan mastiff leaped upon him, nearly bowling him over in eager welcome.

"Down Mengo!" he ordered kindly. "I've been messed up enough already!"

Smiling wanly, he stopped a moment to pat the flat, pantherlike head and woolly, bristle-ridged back of his huge pet. Then he stumbled on to his sleeping quarters.

A taciturn Swiss doctor came, bound him up, and left. It was afternoon when he awoke, mightily refreshed. Little Eight was waiting with broth and wine.

"Is all at peace on the streets, Sheeow Ba?" asked Weston.

"Yes, Ancientness. The rising is completely crushed."

"Bring me the papers."

With high anticipation in his face Weston

opened the English daily. He started and sat up suddenly. "What is this!——"

Publication of the alleged traitorous treaty makes the self-styled Patriots the laughing-stock of the nation. The document seized by the students proves to be proper and ordinary. What they claimed would be justification for their drastic action against the Foreign Minister, becomes justification for the President's drastic action against them. The text of the treaty received from the hands of a partisan of the students themselves, after they had forcibly taken it from the Foreign Office, follows——

Weston's cheeks flamed; he bit his lips in perplexity. "Surely I must be dreaming!" he muttered. "I'll have to read that document myself. . . . Little Eight!" he called, "Take my card at once to Editor Chew of the *Peking World* and get the papers I left with him last night!"

What did it all mean? Had there been some dreadful mistake? Surely the document quoted here could never have been the original treaty!

As Weston anxiously awaited the boy's re-

turn a black suspicion forced itself to his mind. "But no!" he thought. "The man is an honorable gentleman! It's impossible, anyhow!" And he shook his head in perplexity.

Little Eight came back empty handed.

"Master, the Ancient Chew says the gendarmes raided his place this morning and took the papers."

There was a call at the gate. "The American Legation chit coolie," announced the dumpy successor of Lau Dah. "Deign to sign your weighty cognomen here." Weston signed and took the message.

"Can you come and see me at once," it read, and was signed with the initials of the American Minister.

Glumly Weston dressed and set out. The rickshaw man, loquaciously sympathetic over his bandages, ran slowly, holding the shafts as steadily as possible. "What calamity befell you, Foreign Grandfather?" he turned and asked every few blocks. Weston told him several different stories.

His cork sun-helmet sat uncomfortably on top of his bandages. The coolie put up the top of the vehicle. They emerged from the net-

work of Chinese *hutungs* near the Grand Hotel. On the *glacis* between that huge, square European structure—so strikingly out of place among the curving Chinese roofs—and the medieval-looking crenellated wall of the Legation Quarter, Weston saw the Dutch and Italian marines playing football. He passed into the Quarter along the marble-balustraded canal which carries the waters of the Jade Fountain. The coats of arms of the Italian, British and Japanese Legations hung out in Canal Street. The beautiful Chinese pavilions of the British compound shot their red-lacquered columns above the low boundary wall. In the other compounds Chinese buildings had long since disappeared.

Turning to the right at the main avenue of the Quarter, now more and more lined with shops and business houses, he came to the American Legation—the one nearest to Great Front Gate. A penalized Marine, doing duty at the gate, welcomed him with an exaggerated salute. A huge lawn stretched to the stone flagging at the foot of the city wall—the southern boundary of the Legation. At the

east of the lawn stood the rickety buildings which housed the Legation offices. Weston turned sharply to the left, where, in a huge barn-like building surrounded by shrub-covered open verandas, the Minister resided.

The portly *tingchai,* one of the most efficient servitors in Peking, who had presided over the establishments of many Ministers, was expecting him. With well suppressed curiosity at Weston's bandages, he ushered him into the thick carpeted audience hall. At the far end, half hidden by a screen, the Minister sat at his desk. He had entered diplomatic life from the presidency of a great university. A man of self-confident bearing, dogmatic in his judgments, he was accustomed always to speak to younger men patronizingly, as if they were his undergraduates.

"Why, what has happened to you, my young fellow?" He rose briskly. "Polo again, I'll be bound! You young bloods *will* risk your heads!"

Weston let it go at that.

"Now, about this student affair last night, and the papers this morning. . . ." The

Minister lowered his voice. "We have been deceived, it seems. Naturally I have every sympathy with the purely patriotic aims of the students—watching against infringements of sovereignty and all that—although of course I can't be committed. But these young hotheads appear to have been following a false scent—probably they have been made the tool of some faction which wishes to embarrass the present government. You are free to do as you like, of course, but it seems that it might be as well to have no more to do with them."

There was nothing to say. Weston, heavy hearted, nodded and took his departure.

Moonlady had followed Helen into the great Langdon compound, wondering who these foreigners could be. And what, too, was this woman's relation to Way Ba-lee? If she was "his" woman she should have stayed and cared for him. That was what Moonlady would have done.

Then her swift dislike flared against this girl who had dragged her away from him and was now giving her hospitality. She received the attentions of Ancient Breasts sullenly. As

her torn garments were being removed, Helen stayed to say a few kind words.

"Is Master Way your man?" blurted the Chinese girl directly. She did not know how to express these attachments among foreigners. There is no Chinese expression for "sweetheart" in our sense.

Helen lifted her head in an amazement in which flamed a quick resentment, but contrived to smile patronizingly. "He is a friend of my father," she said. "We are often together."

Moonlady took her literally and brightened. No Chinese maid would equivocate about such a matter. With more grace she allowed herself to be bathed, fed and put to bed. It was not until the late evening, as she was being dressed in new garments procured by Ancient Breasts, that Helen again came in.

"You are beautiful!" Helen cried impulsively, gazing at the young girl's perfect proportions. "But why do you tie that tight band about your breasts? It seems so harmful and foolish!" But even as she spoke, she regretted her rudeness.

Moonlady shrank back. "Do such things

mean nothing to you foreign women?" she exclaimed.

"I am sorry, little tigress!"

Helen turned away. Neither woman had been within a hemisphere of the other's meaning.

It was dusk now. Moonlady was walking in the park when an automobile drew up with a tall, grey-haired man. She saw Helen run into his arms. "Inelegantly demonstrative, these foreign women—when they want to be!" she said to herself. Then her gaze fixed on the coolie closing the gates. It was Lau Dah!

This, then, was the mansion of the President's Adviser! She was a refugee guest in the home of the man whom she accused of having brought death to her comrades and ruin to her cause! Furtively she stole to the gatehouse and called to Lau Dah from a clump of bushes.

He stared, came close and peered into her face. "The Little Chairman!" His hands went up excitedly. "You live! Fate gives one mitigation! But what do you here? This post is my risk, not yours."

"Lau Dah," she commanded, "make no voice. Let me out of here!"

Weston, dozing fitfully on his couch at Sweet Rain Hutung, opened his eyes to the light of the round moon which streamed through the screened lattice-work. His mind turned again to the young patriots. Had he betrayed them? Whom could he confide in and ask for assurance?

That moon! The "love" moon. He thought of last night on the ledge. It seemed ages away, yet the sweet pressure of those delicate hands seemed still present on his bruised forehead. . . . The bandage must be slipping. He put his hand up and touched—warm fingers.

He threw back his head.

"Moonlady!"

She came from behind his couch. "Are you startled, Way Ba-lee?" she whispered.

"What are you doing here?"

She put her cheek to his. The answer was so simple. She was ministering to his great need.

He drew her close and held her for a few delicious moments—then roused himself.

"Why have you left the foreign lady?" he demanded.

"Did you suppose I could accept the shelter of the Wolf? I hate him—even as I love you!"

Weston closed his eyes. It was hard to think. She kissed him—another of those marvelous caresses, beginning with the full lips and drawing to a rosebud point.

Suddenly he sat up.

Moonlady had stepped back. Deliberately she was unclasping her satin jacket, letting it slip to the floor. Soon she was unfastening the jeweled pins of her tight girdle beneath. And suddenly her breasts gleamed like two lotus buds on a moon-drenched pond.

She held the girdle out to him. "I would make it yours," she whispered. Her low, flute-like voice was in itself a caress. "For you," she repeated. "I would wear it no longer."

Weston clenched his fists until the veins showed on his brow. He sat silent for what seemed an endless time. The girl stood like a statue in the chaste light.

"Moonlady," he commanded hoarsely, "come here."

She floated to his side. Slowly he kissed each breast. Each stood out full and red at the

touch of his lips. Then with trembling hands he replaced the girdle and pinned it.

Limply, with wounded eyes, she watched his fumbling fingers. Her face betrayed disappointment, shame, reproach. It was long before she spoke.

"Is it the foreign woman, Precious One?" she asked in a gentle, shaken voice.

"It is."

"Do you love her?"

"I love her."

"And you love me not? Not a drop—or a drop of a drop?" She repeated the Chinese idiom. "Did you save me to cast me aside?"

Weston recalled the Chinese belief in the peculiar responsibility of a rescuer for the life he has saved.

"I love you not a drop, but a torrent. But she has a right to me. I have loved her long!"

Moonlady replaced her jacket. "We shall meet again, Precious One," she whispered hoarsely and slipping out into the moonlight, she was gone.

Immediately, he wanted her. He struggled to lie still but his desire gained strength. It

overpowered him. Throwing on a kimono he ran to the gate, where the concierge was dropping the bar. He snatched the latch and kicked the gate open. The moonlight flooded down on the grey walls and worn flagging of Sweet Rain Hutung.

It was empty.

At mid-morning, Lau Dah, on duty at Langdon's gate after his off-shift, opened to a light knock. He admitted Moonlady, pale of face, determined of lips.

"Take me to the Adviser's daughter," she demanded, ignoring his amazement. Silently he led the way.

Helen, looking out at the latticed window of her isolated pavilion, observed their approach. She rose from the lacquer table where she had been reading and drew herself erect as Moonlady entered. The Chinese girl bowed deeply, moving her closed hands with knuckles touching up and down before her. Then she withdrew a step waiting for permission to speak.

"You left without much ceremony," Helen said reproachfully. "You return with more."

"Some day," replied Moonlady in a low,

steady voice, "you too may know how uncomfortable is the hospitality of an enemy-house. But the enemy is your father and the hospitality was yours. You, then, I thank. I would beg to be your friend and I have come to offer myself as your slave."

Helen stared at her visitor. "What do you mean?" she said.

Moonlady bowed her head and clasped her hands. "Do you love Way Ba-lee as he loves you?" she asked softly.

"This is impertinence! My love can be no affair of yours!"

All Helen's English reserve dropped from her. Her eyes gleamed with an unaccustomed light of anger. She was amazed, even at herself.

Moonlady raised her head, unclasped her hands and thrust her arms rigidly downward. "Answer," she demanded imperiously. "Do you love him?"

Helen lifted her head high.

"Of course I do!"

"Then I beg for a minor share in his heart and home. If you are to be his wife, will you accept me for your slave and his concubine?"

This was too much! Helen leaned weakly against the table, for support. She tried to speak, but for a moment could make no sound. Finally she stammered: "Surely he did not put you up to this?"

"He knows nothing of it. It is my proposal. Only he has said that he loves me—but he belongs to you."

For a moment neither woman spoke. What to the Chinese girl was the most beautiful and supreme expression of love and sacrifice was to Helen absurd and shameful.

"Ridiculous!" Helen found her voice again. "That might do for you Chinese. But we are Christians!"

"I know nothing about your marriage customs," replied Moonlady. "But I have read of a great hero in your Christian Bible, named Ya-ko-bay, who did much as a Chinese lover might have done."

"But you know nothing of love! A woman who loves a man will not share him!" She flushed with shame. "He shall choose between us—if you think he loves you!" There was scorn in her tone.

Moonlady took a step forward, her eyes

flashing, the fire in her temples. "May fate teach you what is love and what is selfishness. I leave you without face. Some day you shall leave me without pride and without hope!"

She turned and ran to the gate. The interview was ended. Never had East and West held stranger communication, and never had they misunderstood one another more completely.

Helen sank down upon a couch. The thing seemed too preposterous to be real!

To share her lover with a native girl! Yet there must be something behind it, she told herself, or the Chinese girl would never have been so bold. She remembered having heard of men who had been captivated by Chinese girls, but surely it was impossible that such a thing could in any way touch her own life and endanger her own happiness! No horror like this could come to her—whom many men had sought and many women had envied.

Hurt pride was not all. The Chinese maiden's proposal ran counter to every conception of morality in which she had been bred. Her whole body burned with the shame of it.

"He told her he loved her but he belonged to me! How ridiculous! He can have her if he wants her!" she said to herself. Then she dropped her head into her hands. Remorse seized her for doubting him. "Surely Barrie would not submit me to such ignominy! I mustn't take that silly little girl so seriously! How can I consider her as a rival!"

Gradually her nervous tension relaxed and her self-confidence returned. If Barrie were involved at all, she would make him forget that this Chinese girl had ever existed. A new light was in her eyes.

"A moment, Little Chairman," begged Lau Dah as Moonlady struggled to open the gate. "Did you read the document you took from the Foreign Minister?"

"Read the treaty? I did."

"Then you are the only surviving one of us who did. Is this the way it read?" He pulled her into the gatehouse and put a newspaper into her hands.

At the first glance, her eyes darkened.

"A falsified version! So that is why the Hundred Surnames have not championed us!

The document read nothing like this. It sold the army of our country and mortgaged her revenues in plain terms."

"Do you think Way Ba-lee could have substituted this?"

"Oh, no—never! It must be the Wolf."

"But Master Way had the document in his hand when he left for the newspaper offices."

Moonlady raised her little hand to her brow. "Oh Foreign Brother, is it thus that we are acclaimed?" she groaned. She roused herself and turned to Lau Dah. "However it appears, suspect him not. He is true, Ancient Big. In some way or other, the Wolf is responsible. Ah, I shall tear him with my own hands! And his female cub—I'll wipe my feet on her yellow hair! Lau Dah!" she commanded frantically, springing up. "Let me out!"

During the days that followed, Weston requested Lau Dah to describe this scene repeatedly.

"But can't you think of a place where she might be, Old Hand and Foot," he persisted, sick with anxiety.

"Elder Brother, she is disfamilied, she is

outlawed, what place is there to which she could go? Her sacrifice should make us ashamed to live!" There were tears in his eyes.

Weston sought the house where her father had cursed her. Her family refused to speak. Anyhow, his reason told him, they were the last people who would know.

Diffidently he questioned Helen. "Did she reveal nothing of her intentions when she left your house so abruptly?"

"No. She left with a sort of threat—something to the effect that I would one day know what it meant to accept the hospitality of an enemy! I did not ask where she was going."

Helen proudly closed her lips against an impulse to reveal the violent interview that had taken place between them.

V

OATH

AUTUMN gave way to bright, crisp winter—ideal for riding. Barrie and Helen were much together.

One day after a long canter they drew rein beside the Eight Lee Pagoda. The bronze bells fringing the eaves were tinkling in the wind. Helen dismounted and turned to Barrie with a smile on her lips, but seriousness in her eyes.

"Barrie, have you ever found your little Chinese girl again? She was such a pretty child—and I thought she seemed quite infatuated with her rescuer."

He tried to seem casual. "No, I have never seen her since the day she left your compound. She was a splendid, pathetic little thing."

Her mouth straightened. "Pathetic! She was a regular vixen! Barrie, if you *must*

associate with native girls, *please* let it be anyone but her!"

She knew she was being weak, foolish. Yet she could not hold it back. Weston merely looked up at the bells in silence.

Weeks had passed since the seizure of the original traitorous pact by the students, at the Foreign Office, and the publication of the false one. The time had gone very quickly. Occasionally, Langdon accompanied the young people to the marvelous temples, steep trails, crystal pools or white-barked groves of the Western Hills. He was patronizing, not too intimate, yet Weston could not overcome a feeling of uneasiness in his presence.

Once, as they headed homeward, the Adviser referred casually to the document.

"Strange thing how that treaty business turned out. Worked just the wrong way for your acquaintances. Too bad they didn't make more certain of their ground in this case. There's plenty of crookedness they might have unearthed, God knows. . . . But, I must say, the authorities need hardly have been so drastic, do you think? They wouldn't listen to me. Advisers are paid these days not

for what they say but for what they keep still about." He laughed dryly.

They rode along in silence for a while.

"Barrie," Helen said to him aside, as they entered the city gate, "you are dead when father is along! Why is that?"

He turned brown eyes which smiled through evident distress. "Call it just the old story of two men and a woman," he answered.

But he thought long of Helen that night. Her grace and courage buoyed him up. She never played her wealth and position against his own humble circumstances. She was splendid!

Yet somehow he craved the impulsive, unreserved affection which another woman had given him. He was paying suit to Helen with another image in his mind—a face like a moonlit pool under dark willows, and two shadowy breasts like lotus buds. . . . He tried to put the thought away.

Spring came and with it, the dust storms. There was less outdoor activity now, and Weston cared little for the grand salons and dining rooms. He wrote occasional impassioned appeals to his papers for protection of Chinese

Sovereignty and spent his leisure studying the language, his command of which grew rapidly. He varied the grind with his violin, an attempt at a sonnet, or a color splash of some temple, palace or busy street. Now and then, of course, he went out for the sake of Helen —yet not as often as she would have liked.

One evening as Weston sat staring into the gloom of his lonely compound, his Tibetan mastiff at his feet, a young military officer was ushered into his study by the dumpy gateman.

"I beg indulgence—are you not the Foreign Elderborn who was friendly to the massacred students?" his visitor asked after the usual bowing and seating. "I am sent by General Gwan of the Shansee army. The General has learned of the traitorous secret pact made by our government and he believes it is about to be executed. He has heard that you, Foreign Elderborn, inspected the original document the students took from the Minister. Is that correct?" He sat stiffly, occasionally raising a hand to stroke a sparse beard.

Weston regarded him uncertainly.

"It passed through my hands," he replied

cautiously. "But I could read little of it. Where did your commander learn all this?"

The captain bowed deferentially. "I face you not—I am only the General's feet, not his ears." He leaned over the narrow table and lowered his voice. "The General has commissioned me to tell you that he has taken the oath of the Patriots. He plots to save our country and avenge the murder of the students. In the preparation of his scheme he needs a foreign friend in the capital. He has been referred to you. Foreigners are involved on the other side. Only a *yang ren* can combat a *yang ren.* You can do things which our countrymen could not do and go places where they cannot go."

Leaning back and unfastening the lower button of his military coat he drew from a spacious pocket in his wide girdle a small case bearing Chinese characters.

"The General seeks your assistance," he continued. "Because of your generous love of China, and for the justification of the martyred, I beseech you to accept his commission."

The fire of the crusader, quenched these many months, flared suddenly again in Wes-

ton's veins. "So there are Patriots among the army chiefs! Fate nourish them! But I —how can I help? Have I not done enough harm?"

"No courtesy-talk, no courtesy-talk." The officer moved his clasped hands up and down. "Take the Oath, and I will reveal to you your new part."

"The Oath? But I took no oath before."

"Perhaps your work is to be more weighty this time. I was commanded to administer it to you. I have taken it—see the seal!" He pulled up his left sleeve. Inside the elbow, between the veins, was scratched a livid rectangle with a line through it. "That is *joong,*" he said.

"For China, and also for Faith?"

"Your knowledge of our despicable tongue is erudite, Foreign Elderborn."

"I have acquired but a drop of your transcendent language, big brother."

"Will you, then, be sworn?"

That black feeling of responsibility about the document still oppressed Weston. Who had sent him this opportunity to retrieve his part—if part he had—in the disaster that had

resulted? Might this connection lead him to someone he had lost? . . . He was conscious of a tightness around his heart. Helen would disapprove of his getting into these things again. The American Minister would no longer favor him. But suppose events should justify the students—would that not change matters? At any rate, adventure called.

"Swear me!" he said.

"Are we alone?"

"Little Eight, go for cigarettes," Weston commanded his "boy" who was exercising the Chinese servant's prerogative of listening, even putting in his own word now and then.

The officer opened the case and handed him a dagger. "Point that to your heart. Now repeat: 'The purpose of the Patriots is my purpose, the enemies of the Patriots are my enemies. If I be faithless, the Seal of Faith shall be cut out of my elbow and my life shall be at the mercy of my comrades."

Weston repeated the strange commitment. The captain drew out a carved-brass *hudzuh* the size of a lady's compact. Then he took back the dagger which Weston was holding gingerly, and seizing Weston's left arm, with

four deft strokes he cut the ideograph into the American's skin, filling the incisions with the pig's blood pigment from the *hudzuh*.

He stepped back. "Brother and Patriot!" he acclaimed, and bowed.

"Now, what is the commission?" Weston demanded impatiently, sopping the oozing blood with his handkerchief.

"First this, Ancient Brother,"—Weston noted that the honorific was a degree *older*,—"we have intelligence that the President's Foreign Adviser is now threatening to prevent the execution of the pact. Perhaps we have misjudged the man. He may be our country's friend. But perhaps his purpose is more selfish. Find out, Foreign Ancient. We will keep in touch with you."

The officer rose and bowed. "*Boo soong, boo soong*—don't escort me—I am not a courtesy guest. It is as well that we be not noticed together."

Weston let him pass out alone—a serious breach of etiquette—and went to his den to ponder. Was Langdon really opposing the traitorous pact? The patriotic faction still

believed it was embodied in the document seized at the Foreign Office and they suspected Langdon rather than himself of misleading the public. This must be Moonlady's hand. To discover if the Adviser was sincere—there was nothing Weston more wished to do for his own satisfaction. But how? Evidently he was expected to utilize his acquaintance with Helen. He was being put on trial—his love for the English girl pitted against the patriotic cause.

"Will this mean more of Moonlady?" he thought uneasily.

There was only one honorable way, he decided, and it was not one that would be easy for an Oriental. Perhaps that was why they had drafted him as an American! He must put it up to Langdon directly. If the Adviser's words did not betray him, perhaps the expression on his face would reveal the truth.

He sat down and wrote a note to Helen. "Can you arrange for me to see your father—alone?"

She wondered, guessed wrong and blushed, doubted, guessed again. "Tiffin tomorrow,"

came by return coolie. "Since I'm not wanted I'll eat at the race club. I'll be back at one-thirty."

Weston had a sinking feeling as he dressed the next day. The interview with Langdon was not a pleasant anticipation. At least the promise of something more agreeable to follow was cheering.

The Adviser received him almost brusquely in the Treasury and led him at once to the dining room. The elaborately served meal was broken by purely conventional talk. Langdon cast a keen glance at his young guest's taut face and passed him the cigars.

"What are your friends, the Patriots, doing these days?" he asked off-handedly. "Keeping any track of them?"

Weston leaned forward in tense earnestness.

"Yesterday I heard from them for the first time since that brutal incident. Those who remain are still trying to avert the betrayal they believe impending in high places. I cannot help but think their intuition is right . . . Colonel, you must know! You once remarked to me that there is plenty of crookedness in

the government. And if they are correct they surely command your sympathy, do they not?"

Langdon put down his cigar, pushed back his chair and crossed his legs. "Weston," he began, "you are a tyro in this Chinese game—a 'griffin'—and a rather sentimental one at that. I have been at it a long time. I've seen many a white man break his heart over the wrongs of the Orientals. It is a dangerous and thankless effort. I'd let you go ahead like the rest except that I have a special interest in you—or rather, I should say, we have a mutual interest."

Weston flushed.

"Now I'm going to tell you frankly and in absolute confidence my philosophy and rule of action out here. There is no faction of Chinese or Hindus or any other people on the continent of Asia that would not sell its country or its soul for money and power. Your Patriots are the same as the rest. Only they object to some other faction doing the selling and pocketing the profits. The only way to play with these people is to beat them at their own game!"

Weston looked his amazement. Langdon continued evenly:

"There are only two extenuating reasons for a white man to live among them. One is to rule them. But ruling them is becoming an uncertain enterprise. The white nations are losing their grip—too damn much sentimentality and talk of 'oppressed brothers.' The other is to make as much money out of them as possible and get out. That's what I'm doing. It's what *they* are doing, from the President down. And it's the motive power behind your young students, in spite of all their high-sounding slogans."

Weston's muscles were tensing, but the older man went on coolly.

"I don't pretend to be here to elevate the nation. I've got more sense of humor. If you are wise you will take the same attitude, without waiting to get it by bitter experience. If the Patriots should be triumphant, where would you be—after risking your neck to assist them? Unless you were clever and guileful enough to get a leverage on them you'd be discarded like yesterday's tea. Or—if they feared no foreign investigation—you'd be put out of the way, more likely, in some unknown

dungeon! Now I will make you a proposition!"

His voice became brisker. He took a puff on his cigar.

"Play in with me. I have access to one side and you to the other. We will leave the country in due time well provided for the future and loaded with scrolls of praise-poems and decorated with Orders of the Striped Tiger. And history will record our self-sacrificing service to the young Republic. The Asiatic honors a man who beats him at his own game!"

Weston jumped to his feet, his blood boiling.

"You may be experienced, sir. And wise. And you may even be right. But your philosophy is damnable! So you include yourself among all these white parasites who are fattening themselves on China—crawling whichever way the wind blows! Now I see why the Patriots hate you. And perhaps I see other things. Perhaps, to further your own ends you permitted defenseless boys to be slaughtered and girls to be raped. Rightly enough they call you 'Wolf!' But look out! Some

day your ill-gotten gains will be a curse to you!"

The Colonel had risen incredulously. "Tut, tut, Weston! I didn't know you were mad. Must I throw you out . . .?" Suddenly he looked over the other's shoulder and sat down with the ghost of a smile.

Weston turned. Helen was standing between the goat's-hair tapestries that hung in the doorway. Head up, cheeks flaming with anger, she came toward him.

"Barrie! What are you saying! Are you insulting my father?" She paused, her hands at her breast, then advanced again. "Please go!"

Weston opened his mouth to speak, looking at her with anguish in his eyes. Then his glance went back to Langdon and his jaws snapped shut. Quickly he went out through the open doors of the dining pavilion.

Several days passed. Weston's indignation cooled to a self-condemning regret. He could not be sorry for what he had said—but it would have been better said outside the old

Wolf's premises. An oppressive feeling of unsustainable loss drove him back toward the Langdon compound. An explanation was impossible. But perhaps Helen would let him apologize.

Lau Dah welcomed him with a grave but friendly bow. "The Little Missie is in her pavilion," he volunteered. "She has been unlively the last few days. The first heat has a bad effect on delicate humors like hers." He looked at Barrie with a whimsical insinuation.

"Will you enter?"

"No, Lau Dah. Take this note and tell her I am waiting here."

In distressed surprise Lau Dah obeyed. He came out in consternation. "She says that she is not in, Ancient Master!"

Weston bit his lip. "Ancient Big, you are my old servant. Can I still lean on you?"

"*Dow dee*—to the bottom, Master Way!"

"Are you fond of Little Lang-Missie?"

Lau Dah looked at him candidly. "She is the Wolf's daughter. She is proud. But she is very kind. I serve her with love heart, Master Way."

"Good. Do you know anything of the recent plans of the Patriots?"

"I have heard nothing since that night. Do they still exist?"

Weston laid his hand on the old fellow's shoulder. "They still exist and they think the Wolf is their betrayer. Something terrible may happen any day. Lau Dah, heart and foot friend, if it does, take care of the Little Missie. Do you pledge me?"

"Ancient Master, my life shall encompass her."

"*Hau.* I return here no more, but you will let me know how she fares?"

"Each morning at sunrise I will come to your compound."

"*Hau shee'a.* Here is vehicle-money." Weston slipped a bill into his hand.

Lau Dah's reports were very explicit. Headaches and red eyes. Hectic days of attending the races. Late nights at dancing. A week of daily rides with the blond, girl-faced Norwegian Military Attaché. Weston suffered not so much from jealousy as from his feeling of utter hopelessness.

"The Norwegian comes no more!" Lau

Dah gladly announced one morning. And Weston was surprised that he felt no happier.

He grew morose. He kept to his own little compound, save for such mixing as his investigations for the Shansee General required.

Slowly, among under-officials, legation secretaries and political gossips he was picking up evidence of the gradual development of the treasonable plot. Japanese were quietly assuming positions on the General Staff, in the police administrations and the Treasury. A Japanese company had been granted a concession to operate a "fishing fleet" out of a North China port. The fishing vessels were extraordinarily large and their "whaling guns" looked more like the armament of cruisers. Weston discovered that the "fish" they landed at their base "packing house" consisted of canisters of powder and boxes of rifles.

A report reached him that the President had summoned the courage to object to his Foreign Minister's bartering of the nation's independence, but that a threat of impeachment for selling appointments had sealed his lips.

A Chinese bank clerk whispered to Weston that Langdon's account had received a sub-

stantial transfer from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and a further mysterious payment from a Japanese firm in Peking.

And all this was just as the British and American governments asked assurances that no secret treaty was being made infringing the "Open Door"!

Meanwhile the Shansee captain called frequently at Weston's compound—always, now, in the cool, silent hours before the dawn.

VI

JOY-CITY

PEKING was soon in the muggy heat of June. The rain comes here when the vegetation appreciates it most, but man least. The parched, brown plain was transformed into a lush jungle of wheat, millet and six foot *gow-lee'ang.*

An afternoon came when Weston felt he could not endure another night of the walled-off loneliness, the smell of mold, the street-hawkers' wails through the wet air. His violin gave him shivers, his brushes were mildewed. He hated his books. For a week his Chinese teacher had been sent away with the one phrase which foreign students of the language never fail to learn—*ming tee 'ann lie,* "tomorrow come."

The great dog leaped into the den with a stick in his mouth, which he placed appeal-

ingly on his master's knees. Weston threw it off and began pacing the room. He was ready to seize any chance to get away from himself.

"The Military Brother!" announced Little Eight, entering with a card.

"Ching ta.

"Not politics but pleasure this time, *Low-yea,"* said the officer bowing, as Barrie seated him. "Several old knock-abouts have met by chance in the capital and have planned a night of festivity in the South City. It has been suggested that you join us. Have you ever seen Peking's Joy-town?"

He paused and looked about slyly.

"You must be very cold-hearted here, Foreign Brother," he remarked after a moment. "I have called many times, yet never have I heard the voice of a woman in your compound. Come! We will find scenes to warm the heart."

Barrie made a gesture of refusal. "You tire your bowels with kind thought, Big Brother."

"No courtesy-talk! We will expect you at dusk at the Heart-Enlarge Pavilion near the end of Outside Front Gate Street."

The cool of evening found Weston riding to the tryst through the swept and garnished Legation Quarter. Passing under the multiple-roofed structure of Great Front Gate, he rounded the impressive Archer's Tower. The gracefully curved base of the latter, fifty feet high, cut by winding, marble-balustraded stairways climbing the sides in perfect geometrical design, led his eye upward to the fortress. He noted its square apertures, like the black squares on a chess board, each originally left to accommodate a giant cross-bow. When ancient arms gave place to artillery, these were closed by panels painted to give the illusion of muzzles of cannon. A good deal of the Chinese character, thought Weston, might be typified by this formidable but harmless thing.

As his runner jogged on he looked to the right and left, where, across huge brick-paved plazas, motley crowds loaded with undisguised personal effects milled about the railway terminals of the capital. In front of him a broad avenue stretched two miles to the Peace-securing Gate in the lesser wall of the South City. Beyond the stations, Weston passed, at his right, the mouth of Peking's "Wall

Street," a *hutung* building up with banking houses of the western model in both architecture and organization. To his left were the fascinating *hutungs* of the ancient "classified" shop district; Lacquer Lane, Cloisonné Alley, Silk Street, Fur Avenue, Straw-braid Court, Embroidery Aisle, Hatter's Hutug; places where half naked merchants presided over open-fronted stores and vended importunately things that glittered for the mere curio collector, but brought forth with quiet fellow-feeling the things that were gold for those who knew and loved.

Tourists were emerging from these *hutungs* in rickshaws, their purchased treasures, in picturesque straw wrappings, piled about their feet and on their knees. Weston's rickshaw man speeded up. Just north of where the great avenue passes between the low-walled, immense enclosures of the Altars of Heaven and of Agriculture, he turned a corner to the right. They came to a stretch of *hutung* roofed with straw matting on bamboo frames.

The puller set down the shafts. "Heart-Enlarge!" he panted grinning, mopping his

face with the convenient "sweat-towel" hung about his neck.

Weston gave him an extra coin and passed through a bamboo-latticed wall, up a path between red and orchid flowers and over a tiny arched bridge onto a purple-tiled portico spread with tables.

The "Old Stick," as an inn-manager is called, came forward smirking. "His Foreign-Bigness Way?" he asked. "How bear up! Bigness descends from his chariot at a propitious moment. The Shansee officer's party await you." He led Weston between fantastic bamboo cages containing talking sparrows and brightly-colored parakeets to a lattice-enclosed feasting chamber at one end.

A group of men dressed in long linen-gauze gowns of a faint lavender color—not in uniforms as Weston had expected—were lounging about, taking a "stayer" in the form of poached pheasants' eggs in bamboo-shoot soup. They discontinued sipping at once and came forward, under the auspices of Weston's conventionally smiling captain, to ask "honorable name" and divulge "despicable cognomens."

After the usual "You first, please," all got seated at the "mat of feasting"—which, without change of name, has evolved since classic times into a table.

Urgent chopsticks piled Weston's plate with candied peach, watermelon seeds, and ginger root. These, with the frequently renewed teapot, remained to fill pauses between courses consisting of three or four dishes set at a time in the middle of the table. Weston had taken a great liking to Chinese food, but the feasts which he had thus far attended had not gone over three or four "settings." He ate accordingly. But he discovered that the first four settings of twenty dishes comprised only the first group of a complicated program. First the sweet: fried fruits, lychee soup with jasmine flowers, syruped lily stamens and lotus seed nectar. Then the salt: omelet, bamboo shoots, bean sprouts, bean curd and eggplant. Mutton, pork, veal and venison, done up in perfect cubes, octahedrons and balls made-ready for the chopsticks. White-fish, devil-fish, and shrimp equally disguised, and sharks' fins soup. Chicken, partridge and sparrow in boneless balls, and, as a *pièce de*

résistance, roast duck with pâté de foie gras as thick as seal's blubber. Weston had no idea he could eat so much. The soy sauce seemed to have some magical way of taking the discomfort from a distended stomach.

"Confucius counseled against talking at meals," reminded the host. "It is better to eat."

The guests bowed acquiescence. The steady feeding of the early courses was broken only by hospitable urging of the captain and polite protests of those being helped with his chopsticks. When tea began to be poured the edge of appetite was gone. One diner would seize the pot. Instantly all chopsticks were set down, both hands of each guest being required to hold up his scarcely-touched cup for the addition of a few drops.

As the feast progressed the sage's injunction was more and more liberally interpreted. Kindly banter went about the table. Weston had to be alert to catch the flavored Chinese puns—more numerous than mother-in-law jokes in English. He realized that this was the first time he had experienced appetite for

weeks. He was almost ashamed of the gusto with which it came back to him.

Finally, with the host's apology for the meagerness of his antepast, came the "real food"—boiled rice and steamed bread—of which one takes only a few chopstick pinches, so that he can say he has "eaten."

The wine appeared, steaming hot. The Old Stick, who had been hovering in the background, advanced, took the pewter pot from the waiter and poured into the thimble held by the host of the evening. The captain rose and bowed to the inn-keeper, received the wine and poured, honoring Weston first. Each guest, rising and bowing, held his tiny pewter cup with both hands.

When all had been served, the host took up his thimble and faced Weston, toasting "*Wan Show!*"—"Ten thousand longevities." Shoulders were rounded, heads bobbed up and down and the firmly clasped thimbles were raised to Weston several times before the wine was finally gulped.

From the portico came an echoing "*Wan Show, Wan Show.*" Weston turned in wonder.

"It is the sparrows, Foreign Bigness," explained the Old Stick obsequiously. "They, too, wish you a long life."

The next round of drinking was accompanied by shouts of *"Hau! Hau!"* ("Good!") Weston was greatly interested to discover a toast, used by many American Indians, and taught by the Hindus to the British, here in China. And again came a weird echoing reply from the birds in the portico: *"Hau! Hau!"*

Weston was responding to the informal cameraderie of his companions, their refraining from obvious effort to thaw him, their unembarrassed inclusion of a stranger of another race in the unstilted flow of talk and wit.

A flange-eared chap with hair cut in erect bristles, told a story, accompanied by much girdle loosening under the gauze gowns. It was a silly little thing, about a foreigner who was traveling in the interior accompanied only by his "boy." "Egg" and "chicken" sound much alike in many Chinese localities. The foreigner tried to order chicken for many days and invariably got eggs. In desperation he had recourse to his limited vocabulary. "Not

this, boy," he shouted, angrily tapping a hard boiled egg just served. "Not this. Its mother!"

Weston laughed heartily—for the first time, really, in weeks. He had "been there" himself.

"His heart opens!" whispered his captain host, nudging a guest to the right. "Old Stick, *ki dzeeoo!*"

But Weston protested against drinking more of the hot, stinging distillate of millet. "Let's *gamble fingers,*" suggested a long-faced chap across the table. "If the Foreign Brother is a good guesser he will not have to drink."

All the thimbles were filled. Each guest shouted a number at the top of his voice, simultaneously throwing out a hand with one or more fingers up. The person whose number was farthest from the total of fingers evidenced paid forfeit—by drinking all the wine. The pot was soon consumed. Weston escaped luckily—or unluckily—according to one's inclinations.

"Old Knock-togethers," cried the captain rising and stroking his straggling moustache,

"Unworthy one begs to announce his undeserved promotion to another post!" There was general exclamation and self-hand-clasping in congratulation. The officer held up his hand for silence. "While undeserving one has been here he has come to feel great regard for our exalted Foreign Brother. The Foreign Brother has been promised something to warm and color his solitude tonight."

"Song!" chorused his guests.

"Shall I call in some entertainers?" interrupted the Old Stick running in from the other side of the lattice partition. "I know a shrine full of lovely idols——"

"No!" they all cried. "Your restaurant sing-song girls break the ear drums!"

The captain held up his hand for silence. "I have received an invitation to bring the Foreign Brother to a place where they play the soft *tsin* and recite such tales as turn your blood to mist."

"Where?"

"At the home of Muskhair, the courtesan. I first went there as body-guard to General Gwan. The girls are Buds of the Pear-gar-

den (understudies of the stage) who live with her. Let us go!"

"But you say she receives generals. What are we!"

"No matter. Did I not say that I have a special invitation? The theaters are now out and the 'subverters' will be home. Have you had enough?"

"Bow-lee-ow, bow-lee-ow," they chorused. For literally, "Stuffed!" is the most polite thing a guest can say.

"Bow-lee-ow!" echoed the sparrows.

But Weston hung back.

"What! You're not declining!" said one. "The girls will be excited over you."

"Perhaps too much so!" he replied. "I should be a good show—with my European clothes and western appearance."

"We'll dress you up as a Chinese—how will that be?" suggested the captain. "The innkeeper must have some clothes here that will do. Come here, Old Stick!"

The manager appeared in the doorway, brush pen in hand. The captain waved to him in the gesture that means "goodbye" to

the European, but "come hither" to the Chinese. "Get out your chest and see if you can make a properly feathered Peking cock of the Foreign Elderborn."

Whatever reticence Weston felt vanished in the boyish hilarity that prevailed. Absurd memories of the pranks of his college days came back to him.

"I'll tell you, Old Stick," he said, getting up from the table, "we'll make a trade—a Chinese suit for the one I have on. How's that!"

"Real talk!" exclaimed his companion, patting him on the shoulder. "Old Stick, get your chest, quick!"

"It's in the counting room," replied Old Stick, feigning indifference. But he eyed Weston's flannels covetously. "I'll have it here in a drop."

The pigskin trunk came in on the heads of two waiters. The manager spent several minutes poking with long hoe-shaped keys at the square brass padlock. When it was open he gingerly pulled out jackets, vests, robes and trousers of linen and silk brocade, satin and

velvet. Some were padded, some lined with fur, others lightly lined, or unlined, for summer wear.

"Here is an outfit," began the Old Stick, shaking out a moth-eaten gown.

"How, now! Look at this!" jeered Weston's companions. "The Foreign Brother wasn't born yesterday! Give him *this!*" and they drew out a long pea-green silk *jong-dz,* delicately embroidered in *moodan* blossoms, which reached to the American's ankles. "And here are black satin over-jacket and trousers to match. Now a belt—anything will do for that—and ankle-girdles—they must be the right thing. How are these for an ensemble in exchange, Old Stick? You will be the most envied restaurant keeper in the South City in this foreign suit. Come! The Foreign Elder will give you the shirt, necktie and collar into the bargain. Is it not so, Ancient Way? It's a trade!"

Amid much mock-serious advice Weston pulled on the garments. His friends showed him how to take up his trousers—they were big enough around for two men—in a graceful fold at the belt, and cinch the wide-woven

waist girdle. Barrie began to sense the ease and pride of the Chinese costume. The combined efforts of the party were required to get his ankles bound just right; for "a gentleman is as particular about his ankle girdles as a bridegroom about his bride," they told him.

The final touch was a little round satin cap with a red knob. Then laughing, they rushed him out to the waiting rickshaws.

Weston wished afterward that he had noted the way more closely. The lanes were narrow and tortuous and the turnings frequent. They approached a little dark jewel of a temple jutting out into the street. In the flickering light of a street lantern he observed that the gargoyles on the roof corners differed from the usual Peking style. Instead of the woman riding a dolphin, which the vain Empress Dowager had caused to be erected on all eaves-points, stood a royal figure with a pear branch in his hand.

"The Temple of Tang the Brilliant," called the captain, who was rolling along ahead of him.

The rickshaw men veered sharply to the left

and deposited their shafts, almost catapulting their "fares" out of the vehicles. They stood before a tiny, brilliantly lacquered red door set in a moss-grown wall.

VII

TSIN

A TOWERING gatewoman questioned the group of young pleasure seekers contemptuously. "You come for amusement? Do you know Madam Musk-hair? Cocks of ordinary plumage do not come here!"

The Shansee captain, tilting his moustached lip in silent hauteur, handed her his card.

She read a few characters. "General Gwan's army? Uh! Wait here. I shall see."

The captain caught her pipe-like sleeve. "Tempter of our grandfathers, tell your radiant mistress the foreign gentleman is with us."

The party of young blades stood in the entry like boys at a kitchen door hoping for cookies. They heard the sound of suppressed high voices. Soon the old woman reappeared, greatly softened in manner.

"The luminous mistress will pour," she said, and added confidentially: "But tea is expensive nowadays."

The officer slipped her a coin.

"Magnanimity is a fitting accompaniment of joy," she crooned, bowing. And tottering ahead on bound feet she led them around the "spirit screen" into a rectangle of low buildings in the middle of which glimmered a tiny pool surrounded by flowering peaches. Beyond it colored lanterns shed a soft red glow through the lattice front of the "straight hall." Under the wide doorway gaudy glass windbells swayed and tinkled in abandoned harmony.

Behind the high sill stood a woman in an ancient-style kimono of Italian green, brocaded with two gold phoenixes. Her hair was piled in glossy black convolutions, pushed back to reveal her shell-like ears. Around her forehead was a lacy bangle of threaded seed-pearls, contrasting with the dully glowing green of immense jade hairpins. Her fingers, slender and tapering like shoots of bamboo, curved about a fan of carved ivory.

She bowed them in. As Weston passed her, a dizzying scent of musk filled his nostrils. She studied him furtively.

"Honor this humble abode by seating yourselves," invited Muskhair in a low, liquid voice.

Weston chose a guest-table and chair of fantastically carved blackwood opposite the door. Above him, in the rear wall, curling incense arose from a niche containing a small jade image of Tang the Brilliant. The grey, flagged floor was carpeted with thick, yielding rugs of a tan phoenix design on a grass-blue ground.

He looked about almost timidly. In the dim light against the walls, girl-children holding exotically shaped musical instruments lolled on tiger-skin divans. Their feet, unbound but petite, were enclosed in coquettishly pointed brocade shoes. Short stockings covering their slender ankles were held by jeweled garters. Their brief trousers—frequently disclosing a dimpled brown knee—were made of sheer silk in pea-green, scarlet, purple and orange. These were bound tightly at the waist by wide

girdles of gold or silver cloth, which showed sinuously beneath the skirts of their satin jackets as they swayed from side to side.

The girl-children curled their lily-like feet under them or threw out their hard little bellies in unrestrained laughter. Their jackets, more somber in color to set off the pigment of their faces, fitted tightly over boyish chests. Rich needlework surrounded the double row of braid-clasps down the breast, making a background for necklaces of amber and crystal beads.

Even their faces were striking specimens of color combination. Here was no ill-disguised attempt to look "natural." Lips were frankly scarlet, cheeks were orange or vermilion, nostrils were green and eyebrows purple—all for an artistic effect. From pearl-like ears hung ornaments of ruby or turquoise. The thick glossy hair of each girl was cut in bangs on the forehead, then pulled back into a long, thick braid, held by silver clasps. The fragile hands—excelling beauty of the Chinese—were veined in pink, with fingernails dyed scarlet. Wristlets of coral and jade tinkled as slim fingers played softly upon the musical instru-

ments or arranged the tea things on the stools.

Toward one end, under a long wall-tapestry, was a teakwood dais on which a girl sat laughingly tossing peas for a black capped nun-bird to catch in mid-air.

While Weston was discreetly observing the girls they were frankly appraising him. A titter went round the room. "Foreign devil," they whispered, tilting animated noses in his direction.

One of the gallants jumped up and ostentatiously offered cigarettes all around.

"Some music for our guests!" ordered Muskhair, drifting from table to table with a teapot of glowing ox-blood porcelain. "You, Lilydew, how is your *pee-pa?*"

In languid obedience the girl took up her guitar-like four stringed instrument and began:

"In vain we cleave the torrent's thread with steel;
In vain we drink to drown the grief we feel;
When man's desire with fate doth war, this—this avails alone
To hoist the sail and let the gale and waters bear us on . . ."

"Beautiful!" interrupted one of the officers. "But how can we sing Li Po without wine?"

"Right!" agreed another. "He never wrote without wine. He should never be heard without it."

"The wine, then," commanded Muskhair. "Apparently these gentlemen are not given to wasting time!"

A servant brought on the pewter pots in their padded covers. Each man hastened first to offer a thimbleful to some particular maiden whom, with swift appraisal, he had already chosen for the flirtation of the evening. She, in turn, beckoned him to be seated and poured for him. Quickly the guest seats were left empty, with the exception of Weston's.

"He is shy," whispered the girls coyly.

"Not so!" The captain came to his defense loyally, arising from preoccupation at the feet of one of the "blossoms." "Possibly you are not sufficiently beautiful!"

Weston attempted a nonchalant smile.

Muskhair came and seated herself opposite him. "The unworthy mistress herself will serve the honorable foreign guest," she said

gracefully. "Is that as you wished, wise judge of charm?"

"Exactly," assented Weston blushing and bowing, immensely grateful for her tact.

"Now Lilydew, some *real* Li Po," demanded the officers.

So Lilydew sang:

"The world is weary, hasting on its road;
Is it worth while to add its cares to thine?
Seek for some grassy place to pour the wine,
And find an idle hour to sing an ode . . ."

When she had finished, there was a round of applause. Lilydew's lover took her in his arms.

"Starflower, have you a drinking song?" prompted Muskhair. "Clovescent will play the *dee-dz.*"

Clovescent drew from the pillows a bamboo flute. Starflower sang an ancient ode, one-thousand years older than any song of the ninth century Li Po, which was new to Weston. He clapped noisily with the rest, and drank several thimbles to the fascinating per-

former. Her quavering falsetto and sinuous gestures were in themselves intoxicating.

"She is good," whispered Muskhair, watching him closely, "but wait till you hear the *tsin!* I have reserved the *tsin* for you."

Weston looked about. "I see no *tsin* here."

"The foreign guest calls for the Harp of the Immortals," announced Muskhair. "We have only one player, and she is very aloof. Starflower, go tell her a guest from outside the oceans would hear the instrument of the sages."

Starflower went out toward one of the side buildings of the court. Presently she returned with the precious instrument, whose technique is all but forgotten. It was shaped like a huge watermelon, cut down the middle, with many strings on the flat side, divided by a bridge into two registers. Weston examined it with curiosity while all waited expectantly for the player to arrive.

A young woman appeared at the door. Her black hair bore a tiara of lambent red coral. She wore no other ornaments, but her face was even more made up than those of her sisters.

As she stepped into the light Weston detected in her a bearing which immediately set her in another class. From the half-light of the entrance she regarded him searchingly. Suddenly she threw out her fan before her face, entered and seated herself.

Weston carried the instrument to her. Head bowed, she took it. She was breathing excitedly and her hand, he thought, was trembling.

He took the stool at her feet. The captain, who was sitting next, leaned over to whisper, "It was she whom the general visited. The prize of them all!"

"Play," they besought her.

She struck a few cords at random, hesitatingly, as though in an effort to regain self-control. Then she broke into the melody of an ancient ode of unsatisfied passion, smothering her tones as they were struck. The second register took them up—entirely in overtones. Weston listened, entranced. It was his first experience with this famous but rare instrument. In a rich contralto contrasting with the quavering falsetto of those who had preceded her, the newcomer sang:

". . . O maiden fair not yet a spouse,
List lightly not to lover's vows!
A man may do this wrong and time
Will fling its shadow o'er his crime;
A woman who has lost her name
Is doomed to everlasting shame . . ."

"Her heart is lonely!" commented Weston's friend with the succinct summarization of the Orient. "Unluckily, I have chosen."

"You have not done so badly," said Weston consolingly, glancing at the "willow" figure of the officer's companion, who was stooping to pour wine.

He turned back to the *tsin* player. Furtively he took her hand from the strings. "Your fingers . . ." he whispered, "they are like the long petals of the wind-lily." The fingers fluttered. His other hand stroked her green satin jacket. "What beautiful material—it becomes you exquisitely!" But now the singer drew her fingers nervously from his.

The chattering group had become silent. "By what appellation are you known, seductive one," asked the long-faced officer. "You have not been introduced!"

A wisp of a smile played about her mouth as she took up the *tsin*.

"Blue iris sweetest smells
Upon its stem unbroken.
A woman highest sells
With her fair name unspoken."

"Great Ancestors! Clever, eh!" exclaimed Weston's friend, forgetting his lady. "What, then, if we pay the price, Nameless One?"

She looked up slowly with wide eyes, not at him but at Weston, and again the American's hand found hers. This time she responded passionately to his advance.

"Yours is good fortune, far guest," exclaimed the captain, tapping Weston's shin. "You pluck not, yet the sweetest blossom falls into your lap. May rapture be yours!" And he returned his attention to the girl at his side who was staring jealously.

The lights went lower. "Come," whispered the lady of the *tsin* huskily, leading Weston out and across the dark court.

In a moment he found himself in a tiny boudoir lighted only by the glow of an incense

punk. The air was heavy with sandal-wood.

"Lie-lee'ow, lie-lec'ow," welcomed a startling voice. Something luminous rustled in the shadows.

"It is only my cockateel," she whispered. Then she gave a low, nervous little laugh, and pushed him down upon the rattan couch. Squatting on the other end she took up her instrument, and began to sing. It was an ode from Li Po:

"The rustling nightfall strews my gown with roses
And wine flushed petals bring forgetfulness
Of shadow after shadow striding past . . ."

"Have you," interrupted Weston, "something to forget?"

"Much to forget, and from this night possibly something to remember."

"Wet sand, fleet cloud, an aching urge to fly,
Stars singing of ethereal things
—But I could only gaze into the sky . . .
Then you . . . and wings!"

"That last is not Li Po!"

"No, that is I. I have written it in my own

hand. Here—treasure it in memory of this night!" With a quick movement, she took something short and round from her bosom and slipped it into the breast of his satin jacket.

"And can I mean so much to you—more than a nightly incident?"

She seemed to smile in the dim light. Her head dropped on his shoulder, and her warm firm little body pressed against him.

Weston clasped her closer. He thought of another night when the scent of a girl-body had been incense in his nostrils, and of his renunciation, and of the fire which had burned in him since. Was this a time to be weak?

"But perhaps you do not understand," he said. "In the morning I should have to leave you—forever."

She cast aside the *tsin.* With her vibrant hands touching his cheeks, his arms, his chest as an instrument, she sang once more:

"In the evening I caress you distantly
Thrilling through reverential finger tips
To rounded hill and valley and expanse
Of your white form . . .

At last, within a grotto in a vale
I drowse to slumber . . . Ah, the sweet, sweet sense
Of being cared for . . . safe . . . alone.

But with the morning sun arises passion.
Fire of possession surges through me then.
No longer are you hills and mystic valleys
And hiding places from a troubling world.
You are but silken flesh and ruby blood—
Something, it seems, I've lost out of myself.
I crush you to me . . . Ah, dear, will you melt
And flow into my veins, till we are one . . ."

"Oh," she whispered, "must I sing again? You have come, you have come—and in Chinese costume! Oh, don't you know me?" —she was stroking his garments—"Precious One . . . Precious One . . . ?"

He did not hear. A great wave of exultation, of passion, surged in upon him and deafened him. And then, in the full ecstasy of his possession, an Arabian verse that he had heard ran over and over through his mind: "It seemed that he was master of all the kingdoms of the world, and that the elements obeyed him as slaves. . . ."

* * *

He did not know how much later it was when his hand slipped under her jacket. This underthing she was still wearing. . . . Oh yes, their abominable breast-bands. . . .

"You wear this, even now——?"

"I have worn it for the man I love." Her voice was low and sweet. "But I have given myself to him . . . so I must give this also." She began to undo the clasp. . . .

Just then the moon broke over the green roof of the Temple of Tang the Brilliant, and shone through the lattice-work under the eaves, full in their faces. He took the girl's face in his hands and looked through her disguise of vermilion and purple paint, shaved forehead and low bangs.

"Moonlady!" The name quavered oddly through the shadows. "You—in this place!"

"Way Ba-lee," she murmured tremulously, clasping him. "Oh, didn't you know—Precious One——"

He drew away. Humiliation came over him. Anger.

"So you came here! You—the daughter of an honored house! Where is your face——?"

She drew back, wounded, her breath coming short and fast. "At least, do not betray me!" she pleaded. "Speak softly—I gave up face long ago for my country. You, whom I loved, would not keep me. Where else could I go?"

"Were you not being cared for? Could you not have stayed where I placed you till we could make provision?"

"I could not stay there because I loved my country—and because I loved you!"

"Because you loved me! You—playing the part of a little *chang jee!*"

"You call me that!" she cried bitterly, jumping to her feet. "Is that the foreign devil's manner of gallantry! Oh, I'll torture you——"

"Go!" screamed the cockateel. "Mud-turtles' egg, roll out of here!"

Weston stumbled into the court and found his way around the spirit screen. She heard him jerk open the gate.

The bird was screeching. Hysterically she tried to quiet it.

"Way Ba-lee leaves," she sobbed. "He leaves! But he will not forget! When he goes to the Wolf's daughter he will not forget. . . ."

VIII

THE SHANSEE GENERAL

IN an unnamed alley beyond the Temple Tang the Brilliant, Weston found a rickshaw man sleeping tortuously in his vehicle. It was only after vigorous efforts had been made to rouse him, that the coolie started up and peered about, blinking uncertainly.

"Grandfather," he mumbled, "I am not now on shift. Please call another."

"But there are no others. Why are you on the street?"

"Where else to go? The stone curb here is high: it makes a pillow, and the floor of my *che* is my bed. Within is a hot water shop, and across the street a stand which bakes corn cakes and sweet potatoes."

"But when you are off shift is not another pulling the vehicle?"

"Ah, Foreign Grandfather, I have been a drop successful." He smiled in justifiable

pride, sitting up. "I own my own vehicle."

So there were grades of prosperity, even here.

"Come, Ancient Head," Weston coaxed, "take me only to the great street and you will not need to pull tomorrow. Quickly! See, the rain falls!"

A huge drop spattered the dust. The sky which had been almost as blue as day was becoming overcast with twisted streamers of black cloud which reached out menacingly toward the brilliant moon.

"The Great Dragon stalks tonight," said the man, falling hurriedly into the shafts, his long robe half-buttoned.

Drops fell at intervals, like the prelude to a bombardment. Sleeping men and boys, draped in fantastic positions over the stone curbs and steps in front of their shuttered shops, began to stir. Suddenly there was a deafening crash, and an avalanche of water descended on the rickshaw. The coolie leaped to put up the top. Before he could get the canvas rigid the wind struck and tore it to shreds.

"Let it go," Weston yelled. "Pull!" The

cool torrent came down on him, soaking his silken jacket and filling the lap of his gown with a pool of water. He shut his eyes and turned his face to the angry clouds, and blessed them.

The coolie was soon ankle deep. He stopped and kicked off his soaked and shapeless shoes. By the time they had turned into the great avenue he was wading up to his knees.

An open automobile was stalled at the intersection. Weston heard English words. "Pull alongside, Old Head," he ordered.

Through the veil of falling water he saw a man and a woman in ruined evening clothes. "Will the lady take my rickshaw?" he shouted, springing to the running-board.

"That's mighty kind—why, is it a Chinese?"

"It's Barrie Weston!" exclaimed the woman.

"Helen—is that you!"

She said something Weston could not catch.

The Colonel looked quizzically for an instant at the American's garb. "Good of you," he acknowledged briefly. "Get in the rickshaw, Toots! . . . Chauffeur, stay here with the car until the flood is over."

Then he plopped down beside the automobile and lifted the bedraggled girl over into the rickshaw.

The straining coolie could make no headway against the swirling waters. Weston threw off his long gown, now clinging like a sheet. Shoulder to shoulder he and the President's Adviser put their weights behind the frail vehicle. Each thanked the storm for making conversation impossible. And Weston, looking at the huddled figure of Helen, further thanked the torrent that cooled the shame of his cheeks. In ludicrous reserve the little procession splashed up the avenue.

As they approached the Great Front Gate, some imp of the skies turned off the faucet. The great moon looked out on the glistening foliage, roofs and *hutungs* of the most picturesque city in the world. They plodded on in a silver light. Langdon seemed to feel it necessary to say something.

"Been to the native theater district?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Didn't know you were a devotee. We've been making a kind of hobby of the Chinese

stage this summer. Nothing else to do, with the foreign community all out of town. We should have taken the hint of the weather-vane and gotten home early tonight. But Helen always wants to stop for some Chinese *chow* after the show."

"I agree with her," Weston said shortly. "One without the other is incomplete."

Helen twisted about and gave him a grateful look. "Thank you, Barrie," she said. "Don't let father blame me too harshly. Why have you got on that costume? Have you been to a Chinese party? You do look too ludicrous!" She laughed. "But I know I do too." And she tried to smooth out her ruined gown.

Just then a carriage rounded the American Legation.

"Ma-che!" Langdon hailed it authoritatively. The *mafoo* drove toward them and the exhausted coolie put down his shafts.

The Colonel turned to Weston. "We need impose upon your kindness no longer," he said. "Helen and I thank you." Whereupon he stepped over to bargain with the *mafoo*.

"Barrie!" Helen turned and looked at him

imploringly. "Have I found you again? Wasn't it all a mistake?"

Weston took her hand and pressed it quietly. Then he turned to Langdon, who had come back and was raising her out of the rickshaw.

"Colonel!" The words came hard. "Before you go . . . I owe you an apology. . . ."

The Englishman regarded him a moment—still imperturbable in his dignity, although hatless and dripping. "Let by-gones be by-gones, Weston. Hereafter we'll keep off Chinese politics."

He pushed Helen into the carriage and stepped up beside her. The *mafoo* slammed the door.

Weston turned to his spent coolie, "I am going to walk, Ancient Head." He dug a wet five dollar bill out of his pocket. "Here. Go to an inn and dry yourself."

The man held up the paper and scrutinized it in the moonlight. "Magnanimous Grandfather!" he exclaimed. "Your heart is good! May your virtuous perfection be multiplied in your progeny."

Then he turned, and with his rickshaw, plodded away under the great moon.

A half hour later, before his fireplace, Weston pulled off his sopping garments. Something dropped with a tinkling sound on the floor. Taking it to the light, he saw it was a tiny tube of jade, carved on one side with the familiar bisected square. On the other was the character 月, meaning "Moon." He held it again to the light, then, with his finger, pushed out a tiny scroll of parchment. He bent forward suddenly, his hand trembling a little, and studied the characters written there.

"Wet sand, fleet cloud, an aching urge to fly;
Stars singing of ethereal things;
But I could only gaze into the sky . . .
Then you . . . and wings!"

"To the Foreign Brother," continued the beautiful microscopic characters; *"to the Precious One who saved the 'Little Chairman' and who now helps the Patriots save their country: in souvenir of a meeting.*

Fifth moon, nineteenth night."

Weston slipped the scroll back and tossed the tube thoughtfully in his hand. A little porcelain "Laughing Buddha" that stood on

the mantel caught his eye. He pushed the tube through one of the holes that represented breasts and heard it clink in the idol's hollow belly.

He was crawling into bed when he remembered that the jolly little idol had been picked up by Helen and himself on one of their most intimate excursions. The thought of it brought a sardonic smile to his lips.

During the days that followed Helen waited in fluttering anxiety for Weston. Instead, came gifts: rosary of peach-pits carved in miniature from *Loong Foo Szu,* the fair of the Dragon Temple; an ancient mandarin gown; and a necklace of carved crystal from "Tiffany,"—that portly and genial pedlar of gems at the Inn of the Four Nations, whose tourist clients gave him his name, his rank as an institution, and his wealth.

Helen replied at first with notes that she was waiting to thank him in person. Soon she began to wonder. Was there another to whom he gave not only trinkets? . . . Or was it still the shadow of that antagonism between him and her father which kept him away? She re-

fused to admit that any native could come between people of her own race or bring desolation to her heart.

Then, weary of it all, she asked her father for a trip to Japan. Weston saw her off at the station—with more presents. Mastering his real feelings, he bade her a conventional farewell. He was burning in twin fires of remorse. One fire punished him because of Moonlady; but in the flames of the other was the image of Moonlady herself. . . .

He tried to work at his Chinese. But between his eyes and the tortuous ideographs appeared the tense, suffering face of the Little Chairman, luminous in the moonlight, abject with love and surrender.

He had not left Muskhair's compound before the insincerity of his insinuation that Moonlady was there of choice had overwhelmed him. Now, as he thought the matter over, his knowledge of her, although confined to the heroic adventure on the city wall and the emotional interview of the night after, utterly belied such a conception of her. How had she come there?

It was then that he recalled the old dramatic

tutor of whom she had spoken on the wall. He began to see light. That old man was the last friend to whom she could have turned. Probably he had gotten her a part in some stock company and lodged her temporarily with Muskhair, where she had improved her opportunity by converting the Shansee General and starting the patriotic movement all over again! Irresistibly she emerged from the darkness his forebodings had thrown about her.

And anyway, what right had he to accuse her? To think that he, an apostle of Western freedom, should have repeated the accusation of her bigoted old literatus father! He, Weston, had flung the taunt at her . . . why hadn't she flung it back? Of course, according to the ethics of her race, the man did no wrong. But how gallant of him to have taken advantage of that!

The truth became even clearer. She had still been wearing her breast-girdle when he came to Muskhair's, the emblem of her chastity. He realized that Chinese men were not prone to insist upon an advantage with a woman, even a sing-song girl. Yet *he* had accused her! His lips curved in self-scorn.

He must do something—if nothing more than take the blame . . . apologize. The next morning he rode miles among the labyrinthine *hutungs* of the South City, in an anxious, vain search for the little door by the Temple of Tang. When he returned, worn out, he realized that he would not enter it if he did find it. Of course she would not see him.

Was there someone he could ask to go for him? The Shansee captain was gone. Weston couldn't have made a confidant of him anyhow, to whom it was all play, to be forgotten on the morrow. Lau Dah, who knew of his intimacy with Helen, was of course out of the question.

He felt that if he could see Helen, he might untangle these complicated emotions. She dropped him sweet little notes from Miajima, Hiroshima and Nara. He sat down to write passionate replies, and instead, posted pretty, meaningless acknowledgments.

A new liaison man arrived and established connection with him. Weston plunged into the General's work. He was not callous enough to determine to forget. He merely, by an act of the will, postponed thinking.

Summer began to break before the reviving cool of September. Weston received a personal invitation to visit the Shansee General in Datoong. With relief, he ordered Little Eight to pack his *roo-tau,* a combination sleeping-bag and container of hand-woven canvas, into which went clothing, bedding, toilet articles, books and even a sack of rice and a cook-pot. Little Eight had heard that Shansee folk lived on sweet potatoes, and was taking no chances.

The long rickshaw run across the city through the keen morning air to the small Northwest Station exhilarated him strangely. He was fascinated by the made-in-Germany train with its tiny leather-upholstered cubicles, and by the switch-back climbs of the native built railway—the first to be constructed by unaided Chinese. From the windows, he watched the rich scenery of harvest-covered plain pagoda-tipped hills, sheer cañons, and towering mountains from crest to crest of which swept the white line of the Ten-thousand-*lee* Wall.

Noon brought him to Kalgan, the gateway of Mongolia, where he saw caravans of huge

camels with booming bells swinging at the crooks of their necks, kneeling at the trainside to unload wool and licorice and hides from central Asia. Their drivers were big boyish-faced fellows padded with rags.

A party in embroidered robes arrived on horseback escorting a little Mongol princess in her jeweled headdress and scarlet felt boots. She leapt from her pony with a grace he envied. She would have passed for an American Indian beauty.

As the train was starting again a withered Lama in yellow robe and hood, fingering a huge rosary of carved walnuts, claimed the opposite seat in Weston's tiny compartment. With a liberty which is courtesy through all Asia, the old fellow began to question Weston in badly enunciated Chinese.

"Honorable age, Foreign Grandfather?"

"I have lived in vain twenty-six years, Venerable One."

"Aye—your courtesy talk lacks not! Your weighty name?"

"My despicable surname is Way, ('Encompasser.') I am unworthily called Ba-lee. ('Hold-reason.')"

"How bear up! Your unnumbered offspring?"

"My quiver is yet empty. I have not completed myself."

"Eye-yah! Do the men of your transcendant land believe in celibacy? It is a difficult doctrine, my son." The old Lama's eyes twinkled knowingly.

"Your Ancientness' venerable age?" asked Weston, side-stepping a possible discussion.

"Eighty-eight!" was the astounding reply.

"And whither is your journey, Ancient Progenitor?"

"I have visited the Bogdo at Urga. I return to Datoong where I am most unworthy keeper of the Cloud-cliff Grottos of the Lord Buddha. I make the pilgrimage yearly. Formerly it took three moons. Now I travel by the rubber-footed camel and the fire-cart. The vehicles from your land are fast, Foreign Sire!"

Weston laughed at his quaint expressions.

"And your own mission?" asked the priest.

"I visit your General Gwan."

"Ah, yes, he has many foreign friends. A

man of materials! This is a peaceful and prosperous district since he sprang up. Never, before, were my Grottos robbed less than twice a year. But General Gwan takes the temples of our Lord Amida for schools. That I approve not. And latterly," he leaned forward and tapped Weston's knee with a long, dirty fingernail, "he drills a large army. We Mongols shrink not at blood-drill. But you know the men of Han do not like that."

The train was passing onto the yellow, fantastically-gashed *loess* plateau. "What kind of land is this?" asked the American.

"Chicken-dirt soil." The old priest gave the rough, descriptive name applied by the Chinese. "Very rich. Very treacherous. It washes into the rivers if not continually banked. Many of the peasants live under their farms in caves dug into the crevasse sides. See, there is a settlement!"

As long as the train permitted, Weston's eyes followed this modern cave city arranged in terraces. He would have asked more, but the old priest picked up his rosary. "I must say my prayers and then smoke," he remarked,

unhooking his beads and long-stemmed pipe from his girdle and settling back with his feet under him.

It was about mid-afternoon when Little Eight packed his master and the overstuffed bedding bag off the train within sight of the walls of old Datoong. A smart squad of cavalry had brought an extra mount for Weston and now escorted him under barn-like gate-structures which were roofed over with shiny corrugated iron.

"I hope the General's new ideas won't prove as incongruous!" he thought, contrasting this chaos with the artistic buildings of the city.

He was introduced to commodious quarters in what looked suspiciously like one of the Lord Buddha's requisitioned temples. At sundown, after a refreshing sleep in the dry cool air—such a welcome contrast to Peking's —he was summoned to meet General Gwan at the "mat of feasting."

The champion of the Patriots received him with a handshake. He was a tall, heavily built Chinese of hearty voice and straightforward manner. In contrast to other military chiefs with whom Weston had come in contact, he

was in the uniform of the common soldier and wore no decorations.

Weston was seated in the place of honor at the General's left. The latter asked a few salient questions about Peking politics, then turned the conversation to such pleasant table talk as a comparison of Chinese and American persimmons (in which Weston willingly admitted the superiority of the luscious Chinese product), differing methods of ranking in national armies, and the comparative wealth and per capita taxes of Great Britain, Japan and China. Then their talk touched upon the new pan-religious movement started by a Christianized Moslem in Shandoong, and upon the possibility of breeding Mongol ponies.

General Gwan's officers manifested a combined reverence and affection for their superior which spoke well for the morale of his army. Weston felt privileged to be associated with such a man.

The meal was short and plain as Chinese repasts go. There were less than thirty courses. When dinner was over General Gwan pushed back his chair, and the officers who were at the table left the room. The General faced Wes-

ton slowly, his hands on his outspread knees.

"What," he asked, regarding the younger man with shrewd eyes, "is the present attitude of the foreign legations, particularly the British and American, toward the government in Peking? Would they lend it support if we should openly attack it now?"

"They are dominated by the President's Foreign Adviser," Weston replied. "If his influence were removed, the government could be overthrown without protest from the powers—excepting, of course, Japan."

"Lang would favor us if we could buy him!" The General's eyes narrowed. "But there is another way to render him harmless—by procuring proof of his double dealing, which would end his influence with the Legations. In any case, if we tarry much longer the country will be sold and delivered. In addition to the Legations we must have the Peking populace with us, and they are still laughing at us over the fiasco of the students' attempt. What a trick of devils was perpetrated on those young patriots when the forged treaty was published in the press! The torments of the Seven Hells

would be too mild for their betrayer! Can you not reveal him?" He looked at Weston sharply.

The American's gaze wavered. "I am sorry —I have not solved the mystery." Did the General suspect him regarding that document, he wondered. Gwan eyed him a moment, then reached for his cold cup of tea to show the interview was ended.

"Do' aye boo chee," persisted Weston, diffidently. "But this unworthy one is not, I think, your only observer in Peking. Are you not in touch with the Little Chairman herself?"

The muscles about the General's mouth tightened a little. "I am. But what of that?"

"Is it not possible that I was taken into Your Greatness's confidence because of her suggestion?"

Gwan nodded.

"Then ought I not to know the Little Chairman's address? There may be contingencies. . . ."

The General's eyes grew cold. "You do not know her residence?" His tone was skeptical, almost ironic. "Well, she knows yours—

that is enough." He raised his cup to his lips. "It is late. Will you honor my chariot at the drill-grounds tomorrow?"

The younger man bowed in perplexity and withdrew, puzzling over the General's answer. In the anteroom he encountered his old friend, the Shansee captain.

"Unthought of, Big Brother!" Weston exclaimed. "How comes this joy?"

The officer, taken by surprise, managed a suave bow. "Unexpected joy! But the General requires me. I am now his aide." And he was gone.

Weston remained a fortnight, but his further meetings with General Gwan were formal. The Little Chairman was not mentioned. At their farewell interview, General Gwan relaxed a bit.

"Be faithful to us," he admonished, laying a hand on Weston's shoulder. "Perhaps we shall soon have the pleasure of proclaiming national honors for our only foreign friend."

"My heart is in your cause, Da Ren," Weston responded earnestly. Then he withdrew, hastening to prepare for his journey back to

Peking. And soon—elated, dreaming golden dreams of the future—he looked out of the window as the train wound eastward again. He felt a great confidence, an ability now to plan for Helen. He would remove from her the stain of a family disgrace . . . he would place her beside him on a seat of honor. . . .

Then a vision rose before his eyes and clouded them. Was he worthy, after all, to plan for Helen? What of that other woman, to whose great love he owed his high hopes of position and glory?

IX

PEAR GARDEN

MOONLADY brooded in the little compound near the Temple of Tang the Brilliant. As Muskhair and the Blossoms would have considered matters, she had triumphed over the Wolf's yellow-haired cub. Why was her victory only ashes?

In the solitude of her boudoir—with its print of the rosy-fleshed "Hundred Babies" on the wall, its miniature dresser perched on a low table and strewn with a wild disorder of perfumes, pigments and brooches—she pressed her bosom against the cool, hard rattan where Barrie had sat, and gave way to tears. Must her efforts to give herself for love always be misunderstood?

Suddenly a flaming tide of anger swept her cheeks. Why weep for one who had insulted

her? Instead, she should be contriving tortures for him! She recalled one of Muskhair's stories which explained the unsolved case of a wealthy young doctor discovered one grey dawning in his motor car with his neck slashed. . . . She shuddered. She, daughter of the House of Lin, thinking like a courtesan! Was her association with the Patriots leading to this? Possibly her noble father had been right, in spite of his harshness.

An ingrained feeling of the enormity of her filial impiety completed her misery. She turned to her paper-bound translations of Rousseau, Locke, Hume, Spencer, Tolstoi and Bertrand Russell, fighting to overcome four millenia of race training.

The frequent confidential messages from General Gwan had suddenly ceased after the night of the officers' visit. She felt inactive, useless to her cause. Her sacrifices seemed almost futile. At this moment, had there been the slightest possibility of a reconciliation, she might have gone back to her father and begged his forgiveness.

There was only one mitigation: her art. Her kindly friend, the old dramatic tutor, had

opened his world to her since the morning when he had found her weeping outside his humble gate. She responded to his severe training, as to everything, whole-heartedly. Already she showed superior ability in the three fundamentals of the Chinese stage: acrobatics, elocution and memorization. But the gruff, devoted old fellow was chagrined at her lack of interest in the ribald and exaggerated farces which would have brought her money and notoriety. Into the patriotically-tinged historical plays, and sad love dramas like "The Guitar," she threw herself without reserve. But farces were in style, and few engagements for the serious pieces were to be had.

Moonlady enjoyed the jolly democracy of the stage people, although the dirt and confusion of their common dressing room distressed her. Also, she found she had to be on her guard, lest she offend stage superstitions. One evening she sat on the leading man's trunk while he was making-up. He absolutely refused to go on for fear his reputation would be ruined. His understudy took the part, received much acclaim, and was immensely grateful to Moonlady.

The actress she herself chiefly "understudied" was in the habit, soon achieved by "stars", of appearing only in the last act, which gave Moonlady valuable opportunity to work before an audience. Hardened play-goers were presently doing the unusual thing of coming for the early acts.

When a sense of the futility of such an occupation was too depressing, Muskhair would come with encouragement.

"Little Sister," she would croon, "be not heavy. You have vitality, voice and suppleness—and you have education. Since the great Chien Lung barred women from the stage lest another might be as great as his actress mother, we have had no great actress. But under our republic, women may again seek glory in the Pear Garden, and it is high time one recaptured for our sex the fame which has gone to female impersonators like May Lan-fang! If I were as young as you I should seek that honor!"

Moonlady always joined the other girls during evenings of song and flirtation, but she refused all advances from the gay young "cocks" or lonely older officers who sought Muskhair's

resort—a resolve in which that mistress upheld her. Indeed, since Moonlady had become "the General's fan", she was almost more important in the compound than the retired courtesan herself.

"Your General has not come around much of late," Muskhair told her. "Is there anyone else you want for diversion? It's too bad you and that young American quarreled so soon!"

"You stretch your heart! No, there is nobody!"

Her General! Moonlady shuddered. If only she could afford to ignore his subtle advances! If only he could vanish into the bleak emptiness of her world and sky. . . .

Three weeks passed in lonely desolation. And then came a message of action from the delinquent Gwan, which took her thoughts from Weston and from the pain which was in her heart.

"You must move quickly," the General wrote, "or the foreign dwarfs will have possession of our country. Two things must be done. The Peking populace must be aroused

and the Wolf's influence with the Legations must be destroyed. My forces are ready but we cannot hope to fight both the traitors and the Powers. I am, I believe, suspected by the Peking government. The treachery of an underling or an unwise word may at any moment drive me into the open and serve up our dish half-cooked. Your cleverness must provide a way."

This much was on perpendicular-ruled official stationery, with "Headquarters, North Shansee Division" printed across the top.

Enclosed was another sheet, faintly decorated at the bottom with a love-sonnet from a conventional old poet. Over the poem, in the large, unpolished hand of General Gwan himself, was written:

"Radiant One, will you not consent to leave your present dwelling? I have before made bold to protest the unfitness of your continuance in that inelegant environment. My agent has prepared a too-humble dwelling and garden on Great Stone Lion Street. Yet it is not entirely devoid of luxury and has the charm of privacy. It is fully staffed. Will

you not complete it with the fragrance of your person? Bring, I beg selfishly, the good luck of your presence to my petty investment."

"Again-script: The foreigner has been here a week, but returns shortly. He asked your address. Does he have such a poor memory for places?"

Moonlady blushed, tucked the letter in her girdle, and withdrew to her boudoir. For hours the messenger waited, and finally she sent him back with an answer couched in the most formal and correct terms.

"General Gwan, Great Reflector, respectfully I reply. Preserve courage and confidence, great and good one. You have truly described our present difficulties. This insignificant one will exert her small strength in the direction of the best remedy. She will approach the students again and with all caution. These can be relied upon to arouse the Hundred Surnames. As to the Wolf—I am pondering a plan to loosen his fangs and to show his sleek-appearing coat in its true manginess before those who now defer to him. Rest the

heart, let the liver not cool. Fear not the Foreign Powers. If in the end we must fight them too, that is the Heaven-intent, which has also ordained our cause to victory. The Peace of the Way. Your Little Sister respectfully courtesies."

"Again-script: Your munificent thought is like the showers of this autumn season. How you have stretched your heart for the insignificant one! But ask not that I bring to your mansion the unluckiness of my presence. I pray you liberty to repeat what I have answered before: I am convinced it is better that I remain here. Forgive your Little Sister's stupidity."

She watched the messenger's departure around the spirit screen. "How much longer can I be tactful?" she thought with a heavy heart.

Then she returned to her boudoir and reread the General's official letter. "It is flattering of him," she murmured, "to assign these two trivial tasks to Insignificant One! However, if the country is to be saved I shall have to accomplish them—that is evident."

She flung herself on the bed to ponder. There was no time to gather proof against the Wolf. And even if there were, nothing would be believed. A confession from him in his own handwriting—that alone would convince the Legations.

Moonlady's finger moved along the squares of the rattan couch as if she were playing chess.

"If there is anything he loves more than his position and pelf it is that yellow-haired she-cub of his," she thought. "But he is wily—to capture him would not be easy. It would be simpler to catch *her!* I could get her—perhaps—through Way Ba-lee!"

She sat up suddenly, fascinated at the thought of the irony in that temptation. Yet it was for the cause! It seemed the only way.

She dropped down again and resumed her imaginary game of chess—a strange sadness in her eyes. "Through Way Ba-lee I must get her," she decided. "Her life or the confession."

Starflower returned from a walk, bringing the cockateel. "The nasty thing bit me," she complained. "I won't nurse it any longer!"

She plopped down perch and squawking bird and departed, sucking her finger.

Moonlady was left alone again with her thoughts. "So you asked for my address, Way Ba-lee!" she said half aloud. "It is well! You will have to help me. But will you suffer greatly because of it? . . . Forgive, Precious One—it is for the sake of the country, which you also love so much!"

She leaned against the couch, her long, tapering fingers stretched tensely to support her slim body.

"When I reveal the blood-hungry Wolf and his cub in their true colors—will you be grateful to me then, Way Ba-lee?"

"Way Ba-lee," echoed the cockateel inanely.

"Oh!" she cried suddenly. "I am so afraid!"

She sank down upon the couch and tried to check her sobs, which were answered by raucous clucks from the preening cockateel.

But soon she lay quiet. Her eyes closed like petals upon the beautiful flower of her face. A silence that was deep and inimical crept into the room on feet of darkness.

* * *

Regularly, Moonlady attended the weekly military ballet class at the nearby compound of the dramatic tutor. With body and limbs she followed his sharp instructions, but her mind was elsewhere.

One day two men, dressed in gaily-figured jackets and transparent linen gowns, entered quietly and looked on.

"Some very good talent here, Ancient Pedagogue!" interrupted one presently.

The perspiring tutor stopped in the midst of a back-breaking somersault. "Oh, Your Worthinesses! Infants, stand at attention! Here are the exalted managers of the new Fecundant Virtue Playhouse. Honorable sirs, you take me at a disadvantage. Enter my lowly house and sip my abominable fluid. What is the latest news of the magnificent playhouse?"

"Unnecessary, unnecessary, Ancient Tutor! Our humble play-shanty is practically completed. The lacquering on the front is finished. The marble stairway to the street is being carved in dragons and pear-blossoms. The scholar Loong Jee-jow himself has deigned to write the characters for our gilded

sign. But one thing remains, regarding which your exalted advice is indispensable."

The old tutor bowed low. His pupils crowded about listening.

"We wish a special bill to open the new house—something unusual that will net the city. What is your most valuable advice?"

The old professional scratched his sparse beard shrewdly.

"Open with Chin Gway—Chin Gway the Traitor," he advised them slowly.

"But the historical plays are out of fashion."

"Open with one for that very reason! Something different. Patriotic feeling is running high. The Hundred Surnames will come for sentimental reasons. And all the traitors, from the Old Grandfather down to the tea-water clerk of his Cabinet, will pay ten prices for box seats to demonstrate their patriotism. That will net the city!"

The managers pondered. The tutor's suggestion of reviving the ancient masterpiece based on the national vicissitudes of the romantic era from the fourth to the sixth century A.D.—which still live more vividly to most

Chinese than the Republican revolution—intrigued them.

"But where is there a company, and where a 'Princess of Han' who could carry it?" they asked doubtfully.

Moonlady, who had been standing among the other pupils, pushed forward, with shining eyes. "I will do your 'Princess of Han,'" she volunteered, courtesying.

The three looked at her in astonishment.

"Koy-ee!" The tutor appraised her thoughtfully. "Yes, she can do it. I will recruit and train a company. We will net the town."

The drill for that day was dismissed. Moonlady went home in a haze of exaltation, evolving a certain plan which had leaped to her mind.

A few days later a grave-faced, powerfully built student named Woo and his two roommates in the National University were amazed to receive brief notes asking them to be present before the main shrine in the little Temple of Tang the Brilliant at dusk the following day. The notes were signed "The Little

Chairman," followed by the square with a line through it.

"Can it be that she still lives?" they asked one another, "or have the Yellow Springs sent back their victim to revive our betrayed cause?" And their "intellectual freedom" so recently acquired from translations of lectures by Robert Ingersoll and Bertrand Russell wavered under the strain.

"At any rate, she seems to summon us," decided Woo. "We go!"

Thus the next evening found them nervously waiting ahead of time at the feet of a highly-colored plaster image of the old Arbiter of Elegance. Suddenly a lacquered panel in the side wall slid aside and Moonlady stepped out, clad in the coarse white of mourning.

"Tell us," begged the youths in amazed reverence, bowing low and standing back, "were you miraculously saved or are you a reincarnated spirit? We have long mourned you as dead with our other leaders."

"It matters not," she replied, overpowering them with her eyes, but bewitching them

with her smile. "Mourn the others along with me, and help avenge them. But mourn *me* no longer. I cannot tell you how I come to be here, but I am to direct you in avenging our martyrs and snatching our country off the auction block of the traitors. Woman or Spirit, I still bear the sign of the Oath!" and she bared her arm before them. "Now—" as they bowed in great perturbation, "will you obey me without question?"

"*Dau-dee*—to the bottom!" they cried.

"*Hau!* Go recruit about twenty of the trustworthy boys and, if any girls are still faithful, two or three of them. Present yourselves, prepared to act desperately, at the great Gate-opening of the new Fecundant Virtue Theatre. Sit near the stairway to the loges on the balcony. At the close of the play seize the yellow-haired daughter of the Wolf and the young man who will be with her. They will be in the crowd. Gag and bind them quickly and rush with them to this temple.

"She shall be kept here," continued Moonlady, stepping back and indicating the secret room from which she had emerged, "and the confession of the Wolf himself shall be her

ransom! Overpower them quickly but harm them not—especially the auburn-haired young man. Be on your guard, for he is fire-brained. And be not surprised if you see on his arm the pierced square, but guard him until I come." They heard her in amazement. "What method is this?" began one, turning up his palms deprecatingly. "This is extraordinary—"

Moonlady held up her hand. "It is the only way," she said shortly. "Permit me to judge of that. May I expect you to carry out my instructions?"

"Koy-ee," they acquiesced, bowing.

Moonlady vanished quietly through the panel.

X

"SPITTOON"

WESTON was hanging to the end fringe of the *roo-tau* while Little Eight jerked out the bedding. "The blessing of your presence is once more upon us," said a voice. He straightened up to see Lau Dah, standing with a yellow sheet in his hand.

"Hello, Ancient Big," he greeted heartily. "What have you?"

"Foreign lightning-message, Venerable Master," was the reply.

Weston snatched it. "Arriving from Mukden at nine o'clock," he read. "Will you meet me? Will give you an extra kiss if you will tell Barrie. Your Toots."

"Why!" He glanced back at the address, "this is for Master Lang."

"The Adviser is leaving for the Western

Hills. He told me to bring this to you and tell you that he might not be able to get back to meet the train." Lau Dah stepped nearer and lowered his voice. "I am quite positive he will not. He went out to the Japanese Minister's temple."

"Blessings on you, Ancient Big!" exclaimed Weston. "Here is a five-tael note to celebrate the Little Missie's return. I am sure you know where to get five taels' worth of fire-crackers and have four and one-half left for yourself."

"*Hau,* Munificent Master!" The grizzled fellow bowed and departed.

At nine points of the clock Weston was on the long concrete pier of Front Gate Station holding a huge bouquet of chrysanthemums. The prospect of meeting Helen held for him both joy and trepidation. In the background Lau Dah marshalled a small army of carriers equipped with poles and baskets.

The huge Baldwin locomotive, leading its train of tiny cars like a hen her brood of chicks, puffed through the gap in the outer wall. Before it had come to a stop, carrier coolies mobbed the steps and platforms. Passengers

began passing huge wickerware baskets and bedding rolls through the windows. Others appeared on the platforms signalling with upheld fingers the number of coolies they required.

Lau Dah tapped Weston. "There—the Little Missie!"

His young master rushed out upon the platform, pushing coolies to right and left.

"Barrie!" cried Helen joyously as he thrust the flowers into her arms, "You dear! But where is father?" She peered about.

"He was compelled to go out of town and was good enough to give me the pleasure of meeting you all alone."

Helen looked very smart in her little cloche. Her cheeks were flushed with happiness as she lifted her eyes to his. Then, slowly, her head dropped and her lips trembled.

"Oh, Barrie, I have missed you," she whispered.

"Sweetheart!"

He seized her in his arms, pressing her tight against him. She held her lips up to him . . . it was the first time. They drew over his to a little rosebud pucker. A remembrance flashed

through his mind. Did all women kiss like this? Releasing her, he straightened up suddenly.

"Forgive me!" He found his voice hoarsely. "But we mustn't stand here! Where are your things?"

"In Coupé Five, Barrie."

He relayed the information to the waiting Lau Dah. A stream of foreigners, officials, fat merchants and toddling women almost swept them off their feet. Weston guided her through the crowd, one hand protectingly on her arm, the other warding off the crowd which pushed and shoved in eagerness to reach waiting friends.

"I've ordered a carriage to wait. Here it is. *Ma foo!*"

"It's good to see old Peking again!" exclaimed Helen as they drove past the familiar landmarks. "One can't feel that one *belongs* in Japan, in spite of their scrupulous courtesy."

But Barrie sat silently.

In a few minutes they had reached the great compound in South Small Street. A deafening barrage of fireworks broke out.

"Oh," Helen laughed after a startled jump, "this is a real Chinese welcome! It must be Lau Dah's work."

Ancient Breasts came running on her pegs of feet and flung her arms about Helen, chattering like a magpie.

Weston hesitated at the threshold. "But you're coming in, aren't you, Barrie?" Helen said eagerly.

"Don't you think I'd better come back later? You will want to freshen up and rest."

"Please! It is so big and lonely here."

He accompanied her to her pavilion. "How cool it is! Have you had any cloudbursts lately?" she asked with a mischievous smile. "If so, I hope you haven't been caught in Chinese costume. You did look so droll!"

"No—never again!" he replied, drily.

"Now, Barrie, please go to the Treasury and wait. I'll slip into another frock and be with you in a minute." And she permitted the old *amah* to shoo her into her boudoir.

In the Treasury Weston paced the floor uneasily, tapping the carved tables. He looked quizzically at the door behind which the treaty document seemed so mysteriously to have

changed its nature. As he mused, he saw that Langdon's bent Chinese scribe had silently entered. The man caught sight of Weston and slid furtively into the study.

"I wonder what he knows?" muttered the American.

When Helen entered he was sitting on the divan, his chin in his hands. She tiptoed over to him.

"How joyful is the return of a friend from far places," she said mockingly, quoting Confucius.

He looked up, his expression haggard. She slipped down beside him tenderly.

"And have you missed me, too, Barrie?" she asked. Her voice was rich and quavering.

"More than a discarnate soul misses its body!"

She drew his head down upon her lap and stroked his hair.

"Dear one," she asked with the naïveté of first love, "is it necessary that we should ever be apart again?"

He closed his eyes.

"What is it, Barrie? What's the matter?" she faltered.

"There is so much between us. . . ." His voice was strangely low. "I am unworthy of you, Helen."

"Barrie dear, you must not talk like that! And we will never let anything come between us again, will we?"

"No," he murmured.

Suddenly there was shouting among the servants outside. "Wait here," Helen commanded, running to the door. "Why, it's father! Pater-darling! You've shaved off your moustache! How naughty of you!" She pulled him into the room.

"My darling Toots! You look splendidly well!" The Adviser held her at arm's length. "Whom have you here? Ah, Weston! Glad to see you, sir. So you got my message!"

Weston came forward with out-stretched hand. "I'll go now," he said. "You two have much to talk over."

Helen laid a hand on his arm and smiled into his eyes.

"Shall we ride in the morning, Barrie?"

"Wouldn't you rather rest?"

"Please, I'd much rather ride!"

"Good! We'll keep the old trysting hour then."

"Goodnight, Barrie. . . . Oh, just a minute!" She went out with him into the portico. "Barrie! I've learned a beautiful old saying—a goodnight wish just for you! Listen . . . *'May a fleecy cloudlet form your couch, a birdnote be your pillow; may dream-thoughts mount the spires of heaven, and dawn bring joy to you!'*"

Impetuously Weston drew her to him. The hot blood was in his temples, and his lips, seeking hers, found her soft full cheek. Then he fled. . . .

When he got back to his compound, he was glad to discover a stack of unopened mail to occupy him. Most of it was from America—several ships had arrived at the same time, as usual. But in the local mail was a long red Chinese *ching-dan* ("invite card").

"The management of the new Fecundant Virtue Playhouse in the South City implore the lumination of your presence at their Grand Opening. On the evening of Worship Six,

Moon calendar Seventh Month Eighteenth Day, Foreign calendar Ninth Month Eleventh Day, a new company which has been specially trained by the management will give the great patriotic play, 'Chin Gway the Traitor.' A star of surpassing beauty and talent will make her premiere as the Princess. Equipageously come!"

There was another Chinese letter, written on small flowery stationery. He opened it and his heart seemed to skip a beat—for "Moonlady" was scrawled in English with a Chinese brush at the bottom.

"Way Ba-lee, Great Reflector, tremblingly I begin," He read the characters slowly. "I write to ask that I may speak a few phrases with you opposite-face. I will not shame you or cause you to think of the past, but I beg to speak with you for a drop. And also I implore that I may speak opposite-face to the Foreign lady whose shelter I quit so abruptly.

"You have doubtless been apprised of the grand opening of the Fecundant Virtue Play-

house on Nun's Pilgrimage, Worship Six, next. If you and the foreign sister will graciously attend the performance I shall contrive to see you both in your loge at its conclusion. The play will be patriotic and the students have been given special tickets. I enclose some which have fallen into my hands. Elder Brother, I appeal to you—will you come and the foreign lady also? Unworthy sister has received great favors at your magnanimous hands. This is the last request that she, garlanded with sadness, begs."

Weston's hands steadied as he read and his muscles relaxed. Moonlady, apparently, sought an opportunity to clear up their tangled relations. . . . Had he not begged heaven these many weeks for the opportunity to apologize to her? He was touched by the tone of her letter, and immensely grateful that it contained neither recrimination for the past nor claim for the future.

Did she wish to establish a new basis of unimpassioned friendship? That would, indeed, be a very desirable and comforting end to the matter. As to her wish to see Helen—

if she were in such a frame of mind, ill could hardly come of that. Apparently she wished to be friendly with both, and she did certainly owe Helen a personal apology.

But might Moonlady possibly divulge. . . . He thrust the thought disdainfully aside. No, surely not! Her proud, reticent nature would never permit her to do that. . . .

Confidently he handed the letter to Helen, next morning, as they rested their horses at the Princess' Tomb beyond the East Gate. For a fleeting instant her expression changed —then looking into his eager eyes, she smiled wistfully. "Let me consider it a moment, Barrie," she murmured.

He pretended to examine the huge stone figures at the entrance of the tomb.

"I suppose I should go and make friends with her," Helen argued with herself. "After all one must allow for the passionate nature of these Oriental girls. . . ." Then her resolve wavered. "Could there really be anything between that girl and Barrie? If there were, she would hardly want to see me."

Weston turned, his eyes pleading for her answer.

"Well, I'll go with you and hear what the lady has to say," she said slowly. "I'd rather like to see that Grand Opening, anyhow."

"Helen, you're a brick!" His face flushed with pleasure.

"Maybe father would go too! He says he has no time for anything like that now, but I'll just *make* him! He's so good to have along to explain things!"

"Good! She enclosed four tickets. We might as well find another and have a real party."

"I know just the person, Barrie—the new American Military Attaché. I met him in Japan and he is to arrive here this morning. He's a dear—and *so* anxious to get in touch with Chinese life. Do make your formal call and invite him right away, before he can accept anything else. He will be at the Peking Hotel. We could meet you first and then call for him there."

And in truth, Weston found the Military Attaché a very agreeable fellow. He was flooded with invitations, but thought his countryman's proposal promised too romantic an introduction to the life of the Chinese capital to

let slip by. Perhaps, also, he thought of Helen.

Weston and the Attaché, dressed in the white "monkey jackets" prescribed by Peking social convention, which look to an unaccustomed eye like tadpoles sprouting tails, met promptly at the prescribed hour in the lobby of the "Grand Hostelry." Dinner was being served within the main salon, while an orchestra from Moscow played airs from "Madame Butterfly."

Subjects of every king and citizens of every nation on earth—stiff diplomats, smiling concessionaires, tight-lipped professional gamblers, unclothed adventuresses and gushing tourists—passed down the great stairway into the dining-hall, or out of the hall to wait in little groups for whatever entertainment the evening offered. Boys with glass-laden trays scurried back and forth, while professional Peking guides, in their ridiculous combinations of Chinese and European dress, approached hesitant guests with pidgin-English solicitations.

"No censorship on mural decorations here,"

remarked the Attaché, winking at Weston as he contemplated a riot of tinted Venuses tumbling over the walls. And as the younger man was about to answer, Helen, radiant in color, appeared through the revolving doors, followed by the martial figure of her father.

"What a foil he is for her!" exclaimed the Attaché, as they pressed forward through the throng.

Helen's orange-colored gown, with its close fitting bodice and flare skirt, set off beautifully her long necklace of brilliant blue crystals which terminated in a fragile ivory pendant carved to represent the seven Chinese fairies. A silver bracelet studded with blue velvet sapphires flashed against the white skin of her left arm, and in her golden hair a comb radiated blue flame as she walked. Clinging to her shoulders was a Japanese scarf, shaded imperceptibly from a color almost as pale as her lovely neck to a deep-toned blue at the hem.

"Good evening, Weston! Captain, I am glad to meet you!" The Adviser greeted them cordially. "You see I *had* to come." He smiled proudly at his daughter.

"Helen, you are more beautiful than ever!" whispered Barrie, pushing close to her. "How can I give you up to a guest even for the ride to the theater?"

She smiled at him mockingly. "China should teach you to show courtesy to strangers and elders. You would not want to neglect father, I am sure." She dropped her eyes. "He's in a splendid mood tonight, Barrie—so keep up your spirits! I'll sit between you in the loge and do my very best to be impartial."

"Only impartial?" he laughed. "Then I'll be sorry I ever proposed this party!"

"Oh, I shall lean to the most gallant! But come, Barrie, father is waiting." Weston bowed and stepped to the Colonel's side.

In the entry a Chinese guide chattered at them. "Big Foreign Masters and Missie likee see Chinese city night-time? Go topside big wall. My b'long belee good guide. Fifuty cents!"

"Get along with you!" shooed Langdon. "Porter, call my car."

"The big Adviser's gas-car summoned!" bawled the liveried porter.

"You certainly seem well-known here, Colonel," commented the Attaché.

"These hotel porters know everyone and everything," replied Langdon with a shrug.

A long grey European car came around the semi-lune. The chauffeur jumped out to hand them in—Helen and the Attaché behind, Langdon and Barrie together in front of them.

"I never saw the city more beautiful," cried Helen. "Look how the blue autumn haze clings to the curving roofs! And what do you think of our Peking sunsets, Captain?" They were driving down Great Front Gate Avenue. "Do you blame the Chinese for making a live red dragon of a cloud like that?"

"I confess I haven't had time to look at the sunset," the Attaché laughed. "I've been too busy observing the performance of your Chinese chauffeur!"

The sight in the streets, as well, was fascinating. The car was dodging through a mass of rickshaws, wheel-barrows and barrow-men —through carriers with loads swinging at either end of their shoulder-poles; tiny blue-covered passenger carts with huge brass-

studded wheels; winding camel trains, and variegated pedestrians. Often the chauffeur leaned out to push some sleepy-head to the side, shouting insinuations upon ancestry which were suitable to the degree of the person addressed, and hurling back stinging answers to the epithets thrown up at him.

"It would be more interesting if you could understand him," explained Helen amusedly. "He loves to take advantage of the fact that he is driving for a foreigner. Hear him revile that policeman! He knows the officer can't arrest us—and won't arrest *him* on *our* account. Father, I think you will have to lecture him again!"

"He wasn't so chipper last time you saw him, was he, Weston?" asked the Colonel with a twinkle in his eye.

Pages met them at the lacquered doors of the theater, and escorted them down a long side aisle, up steep steps, to a box—artistically fitted with tea-furniture—directly over the left end of the stage, in full view of the audience.

"What in the world!" exclaimed Helen, pointing to the most prominent boxes, in which

huge portrait photographs had been set up and were being guarded on either side by soldiers at attention.

Langdon snorted. "See our *Dzoong-toong* there? And his cabinet members in the tier below? That's the way they attend the play and advertise their accord with its patriotic sentiments. We are in good official company! Look—under each likeness you can see stated the amount paid by His Greatness for the box. Two hundred dollars by the President you notice, although the sum may have been doubled by the management to give all parties 'more face!'"

"This seems both a sophisticated and a naïve land!" remarked the Attaché, lifting an eyebrow and joining in the laughter.

Several of the loges were furnished with benches and tables. Food was being served from an upstairs kitchen for parties who intended to dine during the performance. Only serving dishes are removed during a Chinese meal and there are no clattering knives and forks.

The parquet of the large auditorium was already filled. Fat merchants in skull-caps,

linen gowns, and short satin jackets slept in their seats. Bony master-craftsmen, dressed in black, fanned themselves and drank tea poured assiduously by white frocked ushers. The choicest benches were occupied by coolies stripped to the waist, who, more out of habit than from the heat of the evening, mopped themselves with their "sweat-towels". Occasionally they made and returned ceremonious bows, but were much too filled with importance to converse with one another. They were enjoying—by that democratic license known only in China—the seats of their masters Big Man So-and-So and Ancient This-and-That, until time for the important piece of the evening. The steady teeth-shelling of watermelon seeds made a crackling sound in the audience like crustaceans crawling in a lobster pot.

"Who are those young men in the drab uniforms?" asked the Attaché of Langdon, pointing to several groups in the parquet and balcony. "Some special military organization?"

"Oh no!" laughed Langdon. "Just students —and peaceable enough, except when some wild idea of saving their country carries them away!"

Had he looked closer he might have remarked a small party among them, including two girls, making furtive gestures toward his box.

"Hot towels! Free hot towels!" shouted boys carrying armloads of the steaming twisted cloths down the aisles. Here and there a hand went up, and into it, over the heads of the audience, was thrown one of these refreshing articles, which was then shaken out by the recipient and pressed over face and hands for the delicious coolness that followed.

The stage, thrusting out into the pit, consisted of a vermilion-lacquered semicircular dais with carved and gilded canopy and low balustrade. There was no curtain—and only one entry and one exit connected with the combination property and green room.

The rear seats and gallery were filled by this time with blue gowned common people and half-naked laborers. The actors and orchestra entered upon the stage, stood about and were served tea, then bowed to the audience and began their performance.

"This is a preliminary farce," explained

Langdon to the Attaché. "Shall I interpret for you?"

"Do, please, father—for all of us!" said Helen, and the rest nodded.

"Right! Well, it opens, you see, with a wedding scene. That middle-aged bridegroom, of wealth and wisdom, is receiving his betrothed from the bridal chair. This is the first time he has ever seen her. She is surprisingly beautiful, and he, of course, is overjoyed! He is addressing her but she does not answer. The household credits it to modesty. And now the bridegroom is escorting her to their chamber."

"Why is the candle carried so slowly across the stage?" asked the Attaché.

"That indicates the passage of the night. Listen to the gong of the night watch! That is midnight, and the rapid beats immediately following—those mean the dawn. Now it is morning and here is the bridegroom rushing out and calling the family together. See!—He is announcing that his bride is dumb! Now the family are advising him to send her back and make the marriage broker repay the costs

of the wedding. But he is unwilling. 'Oh, no —she is too exquisite!' he tells them. 'If only she could talk!'"

Helen and Weston were leaning over the balcony, watching the play intently. The girl turned questioningly to her father. "Who are those men entering with the flowing robes, bulging cases and pompous airs? Are they doctors? I can't quite follow everything they say."

"Yes, they are physicians. They have been summoned to see if the bride's dumbness can be cured. Watch—you will see them one by one pronouncing her incurable. But that one on the end," Langdon pointed, "is claiming he can cure her by a simple surgical operation."

Helen turned to pass on the explanation to Weston, while the Colonel continued his interpretation to the Attaché.

"There, his knife flashes! . . . She is beginning to speak hesitatingly. Her husband, overjoyed, is coaching her! Now she speaks faster! The rest are beginning to squirm under her rapid flow of words! The other physicians flee. Look at the distracted husband. He is pleading with the surgeon to make her

dumb again. 'I cannot do that!' he says. 'Then what shall I do? My happiness is ruined!' 'I might make you deaf,' says the surgeon. 'Oh, please do! Quickly, quickly!' The husband submits eagerly to the operation. Now it is done, and he looks at his bride. He cannot hear her words—he merely sees her exquisite form. He presses a wad of bills into the doctor's hand, and runs to take her in his arms."

"Why," exclaimed the Attaché turning from the stage to Langdon. "I thought that was a plot from Anatole France!"

"You see now where Anatole France got it," laughed the Adviser. "And soon you may see where even Goethe and other great western writers borrowed plots."

"What's to be the big piece of the night, Colonel?"

"It is given here," said Weston, producing the large red slip.

"Yes," said Langdon, pointing at the announcement. "It's called 'The Spittoon.' It's one they always do with great *éclat.*"

"Father—the what?" cried Helen with a little grimace.

"Chin Gway—'The Spittoon.' It designates a man—a character of their romantic period, who lived about 250 A.D. He was the Chinese Guy Fawkes—or," nodding at the Attaché and Weston, "what Benedict Arnold has become, I believe, to Americans. But Chinese imagination far surpasses such crudities as hanging in effigy. The gentleman in question is merely referred to now as 'The Spittoon'—so that everyone may do him justice."

The men laughed.

"What wrong did he do, father?" asked Helen.

"No more, I suppose, than other adventurers of the Three Kingdoms, such as the Three Brothers of the Peach Garden. But Chinese imagination, with its penchant for either beatification or utter damnation, has made him the model villain—and has converted Gwan Yü into a God and his other contemporaries, Lee'oo Pay and Jang Fay, into heroes."

"Oh, now I remember hearing about it," said Helen wrinkling her brow. "Didn't Chin Gway sell first one side and then doublecross the other?"

"Yes. It's all very scandalous to these peo-

ple. But given the opportunity, any of their heroes would have done the same—at least if Chinese were the same then as they are now!" said Langdon cynically. His words were directed particularly at the Attaché, who was listening with wide eyes.

Weston turned aside, and the Adviser, noticing this, forthwith changed the subject.

"This announcement about a new actress is intriguing," he remarked, tapping the invitation card. "According to custom, the new star's name will not be divulged unless she makes a hit. In order to discover who she is, the audience must give her a good hand. It's an original idea!"

"Well, if she doesn't make good, no one will care," remarked Weston carelessly, as his eyes sought Helen's.

"But I understood that the Chinese had no actresses—that all female parts were taken by impersonators," said the Attaché.

"Oh, you're out of date," laughed Helen gaily. "Chinese women are doing everything nowadays—even taking part in revolutions." She glanced quizzically at Weston. "These new theaters are all using mixed companies.

The ban put on actresses by the old Emperor Chien Lung, issued out of spite because his own mother was of the profession, has gone out of style. Still, I must say I don't think any one of the new Chinese actresses makes as compelling a stage woman as the female impersonator May Lan-fang."

"Maybe we shall see the rise of a great new Chinese female star tonight," said Weston.

That the major piece of the evening was about to begin was indicated by the appearance, one by one in the aisles, of sleek gentlemen with fans. Coolies quietly slipped out of seats and effaced themselves from the scene as these ponderous gentlemen took their places.

Another preliminary farce drew to a close with the "mounting on high" of the last surviving actor in the cast, who, dramatically arising from the dead, announced that he was his own pall-bearer, and went through the business of carrying himself out. Then the property men changed the scanty scenery in full view of the house.

A roll of drums ushered in the main play. Langdon briefly explained the scene. It was

in a grove of flowering peaches, where Lee'oo Pay, royal scion of the glorious Hans, and his sworn brothers, Gwan Yü and Jang Fay, were writing—in blood from their arms—the oath to restore the throne to the rightful family. They were decked in glittering costumes with peacock feather head-dresses and faces painted black and red. Elegant speeches and passionate gestures distinguished these principals.

"The custom of painting the warriors' faces is said to have been introduced by Gwan Yü himself, because his countenance was naturally too scholarly to frighten an enemy," explained the Adviser.

"What actors!" exclaimed Weston, clapping his hands on his knees. "Fortunately they have not been bothered by intricate staging, fussy playwrights or blockhead producers."

Soon the sworn brothers left the stage, and a woman entered—a woman as regal as a stalk of bamboo—conventionally masked for her part.

Langdon continued interpreting the action.

"Here is our star. She is the royal daughter of Lee'oo Pay. The tall figure with the

whitened face who is entering after her plays Chin Gway. His make-up denotes the villain. He proposes that for her love he will throw his forces into the balance on her father's side . . . Now watch her torture of indecision. . . . She is torn between her feelings of repulsion and her devotion to her father."

The audience hissed.

"Now she agrees to pay the price . . . I predict this new star will make good! But it depends on how she carries the next act."

The exquisiteness of the actress's movements fascinated Weston. Once, as he watched her closely, she turned her masked face directly toward him. He thought she started . . . then her gaze shifted to the other occupants of the loge. It was just his imagination perhaps, for she plunged into her lines again, more than ever absorbed in her part.

The act closed. A few moves by the blue-trousered carpenters and a city rose, as if by magic, in the background.

"Lee'oo Pay, the last of the Hans, is at bay in his capital," explained Langdon.

A beating of drums and gongs and a

screeching of instruments introduced a furious assault and defence. A waving of brilliant banners, clash and glitter of arms, and marvellous displays of swordsmanship kept the spectators at the edge of their seats. Weston seemed to see caparisoned horses charge across the stage, although in actuality he saw only men prancing with whips in their hands.

"The god-like Gwan Yü, fighting ten men, has fallen!" resumed Langdon. "Now Jang Fay, second of the sworn brothers, goes down. The royal Lee'oo Pay himself, in the imperial dragon garments, is coming through the gate to take their place. He plunges into the fray. See, his daughter appears on the wall, overcome with anxiety. 'Will Chin Gway never arrive?' she is saying. Fighting desperately, her father is beaten to the ground. By Jove, that girl's display of grief is well simulated! Now, with the courage of desperation, she puts on a helmet and armor and rushes out, calling encouragement to the men. They rally, drive the besiegers back for a moment, drag in the bodies and safely close the gates. The assaulters have done bloody work—but they have lost heavily. Now they are holding a council

of war. Here comes a scout, shouting, 'Chin Gway arrives in force!' "

A fanfare from the orchestra announced the end of the act. The property men came on again.

The little party sat silent during the change of scenery. Helen's hand touched Weston's arm. He caught and pressed it.

"What is going on now?" asked the Attaché, as the action resumed. "This is a room in the palace," answered Langdon. "In the women's apartments—indicated by the phoenix design on the rugs and hangings. Ah, here is the princess! See how sad and dignified she looks! And here comes our fine Chin Gway, dressed now in the Dragon Robes. 'You arrive too late to save my father!' she tells him. 'But his royal line shall continue, perpetuated by you. You shall be regent until the child which now stirs in me is of age. When will you declare me your queen?' But he only laughs in her face!' "

The audience was making sounds of spitting.

"He says: 'I care nothing for the line of the Hans. And as for you—I find royal flesh no

more enthralling than any other. I propose to establish the imperial line of Chin Gway, not of Han—and I shall choose my own queen! You may abide as a concubine if you wish—or is that beneath you? If so, there still remains the silken cord!' . . . Look! He draws the instrument of suicide from his girdle and tosses it to her, then walks to one side, chuckling. Yet no brave rescuer appears. Chinese drama is sometimes truer to life than ours. And now for an exquisite suicide!"

The actress took the cord and looked at it dazedly. The audience had risen, and was pressing forward toward the aisles. Weston's heart leaped. He remembered that one of China's greatest actors, three hundred years ago, playing Chin Gway too well, had been stabbed to death by a too excited spectator, just at this point in the action.

Then something happened. Suddenly the heroine tore off her mask, her lips working with emotion.

"My God!" Weston turned pale and dropped Helen's hand.

Helen turned to him with a little cry. "Why it's—it's that Chinese girl!"

"Moonlady!" he murmured, as though in a trance.

But something was wrong. Moonlady was not twisting the cord about her neck. She was raising it high in the air. The audience gasped audibly.

"Fellow-born!" Her vibrant contralto rang through the hall. "Fellow-born—Patriots—let Chin Gway go! Chin Gway is long since dead, But there——" she pointed directly at the box occupied by the foreigners, "There sits the Chin Gway who sells us today! And with him, decked in the jewels for which he sells us, sits his daughter—the daughter of The Wolf—surrounded by her suitors!" Her eyes sought the uniformed group in the audience. "Students! There is the man who betrayed your slain leaders! Patriots! I am your Little Chairman! I call upon you for vengeance!"

All eyes were turned on Langdon and his party for one tense, breathless moment. Then a voice cried: "Strangle him!"

Three young men jumped up on one of the benches.

"Now?" called one hoarsely, looking to Moonlady for directions.

"Take them!" she commanded, pointing to the box.

The students dashed for the stairway. Others leaped to their seats. "Revenge for the students and Patriots!" came the cry from all parts of the theater. The unsatisfied emotions of the audience were seizing a welcome outlet.

"Kill the Wolf!" "Down with the traitor!" "Destroy the foreign parasite!" shouted the crowd, surging forward.

A mob was pressing up the balcony steps. Several men began climbing the pillars which supported the boxes.

Langdon stood up self-possessed and cold.

"This is a pretty mess you've got us into, Weston," he said with a contemptuous stare. "Captain," turning to the Military Attaché, "We may have to knock a few of them down! Will you guard the girl from behind?" He stepped out of the box. "Stand back, you swine!" he roared.

Two students blocked the aisle. Langdon

struck at them, murmuring imprecations between clenched teeth.

"Will you move on, you impudent devils!" He struck again. "You stand and take that? What has come over you Chinamen!"

A coolie crawled over the balustrade of the box and threw himself on Langdon's neck, bearing the Adviser down. Someone snatched at Helen from the aisle. The Attaché jumped to her rescue. Another man toppled into the box and caught at her skirt. Weston seized him, bent him back over the balustrade, and sent him headlong onto the mob below.

"Get her out of here!" cried Weston to the Attaché, who had Helen in his arms. "Crawl over the side of the box and make for that window! Then climb down the bamboo awning supports! Rush for it!"

He guarded them to the window. Then he dived back into the mass of humanity surrounding Langdon. For a moment he saw Moonlady, pale and rigid on the stage, still pointing towards the box.

The balcony was seething with a mass of struggling humanity. Suddenly there was a

tearing sound . . . shrieks . . . a terrific crash. Weston hurtled through the air, fell with a stinging impact, and gradually raised himself to a sitting posture.

He was on the stage. Other bodies had fallen about him. One lay across his legs, and he recognized Langdon, who was insensible. With a painful effort Weston turned over and crawled away, dragging the other man along with him. A cry rose from the pit. Several blue-gowned artisans clambered up, and, snatching off their left shoes, began beating the American with their heavy foot-wear.

A woman's voice pierced the din: "Strike him not! Loose him, you fleas! Let me attend to him!"

The beating and pulling stopped and, dimly, Weston saw Moonlady standing over him. "Students, to the front here!" she called imperiously, flinging up her arm.

A score of students, pushing the throng aside, gathered about her and eyed the prostrate white men.

"Unexpected fortune has befallen tonight, brothers," she said to them. "Let us seize the opportunity! I will take care of these prison-

ers, if Woo and Lin will remain with me. The rest of you lead the populace to the President's palace and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. See that they are closely surrounded! As for the injured here, the medical students may care for them. Now go, quickly!"

The students turned to the mob. "To the *Dzoong Toong's* palace!" they shouted, and their cry was repeated from mouth to mouth.

"Brother Lin," Moonlady ordered, catching a lad's arm, "go wire the Shansee General to march at once! And you, Woo, help me take these men away. Bind the Wolf, there. He revives . . . tie him, flame-quick! Carry the other one gently. Have you a conveyance?"

"Little Chairman, the Wolf's gas-car stands at the doorway. Shall I appropriate it?"

"If you can drive it. Trust not his chauffeur."

By this time, Barrie was faint with pain. The stage, the theater, the standing figures whirled about him faster and faster. . . .

When he revived his hands were on the cool

rattan of a Chinese bed, and something round and silken was under his cheek. A glorious moon threw its beams down a slanting roof into his eyes . . . the gargoyles on the roof corners seemed familiar . . . and he knew he was in the temple of Tang the Brilliant!

He looked up—into the face of Moonlady. She was bending to kiss him.

He turned away his head.

XI

SACRED WHISKERS

WHEN the balcony went down Helen and the Attaché were struggling to get out through the window. The crash left them clinging to the ledge.

"Please leave me!" pleaded Helen, "Go and see if father is all right!"

The Attaché helped her out onto the bamboo framework. "We are taught to care for women first," he said shortly.

Painfully they worked their way down the criss-cross supports, the sharp split-reed lashings cutting their fingers. Helen's scarf and necklace had been lost before she reached the window. Now her gown caught on a bamboo-end and tore to the waist. Her long hair came down in a lovely, rippling cascade which she tried vainly to pin up when their feet touched solid ground.

The Attaché looked about warily.

They were in a little side alley. He half carried her to the street, hailed a passing rickshaw and bundled her in, walking for a little distance behind the vehicle. Soon they encountered another and set out for the Langdon compound at a fast trot.

"Captain—please do something for father—I can get home alone!" she pleaded, in despair.

"It will take but a moment to see you home. I'll be thinking what to do!" he shouted back to her from his own rickshaw.

Lau Dah opened to their knock. He gasped at Helen in amazed concern.

"Hadn't I better call a doctor for you?" asked the Attaché, assisting her from the vehicle.

"No, no! Go back and look out for father. Leave me! I'm all right."

"I think we had better notify the British Legation—or the Chinese government!"

"It will take hours to get action that way—everyone will be out for the evening—can't you do something quickly, on your own responsibility?" She was pushing him away, almost sobbing with nervousness.

"I have no force under my command, Miss Langdon. I am only Military Attaché, not Commander, and I know nothing about Peking. But you might send one of your servants to notify your Legation and I'll go back to the theater to do what I can."

"Then, I beg you, leave me here. I am safe in my own compound. Please go!"

He ran out to his rickshaw and pointed the puller down the *hutung*. The vehicle set off at a fast pace. The coolie who had pulled Helen hesitated a moment, then set out after the Attaché in frantic pursuit, dragging his rickshaw with one hand and gesturing wildly with the other as he ordered them to stop.

Helen entered the tiny brick-flagged gatehouse. "Lau Dah," she ordered, "Quick—get me paper and pen! Yes, the Chinese brush will do! Take this note to the Ingwo Fu!" She scribbled a moment, handed the paper to the gateman and watched him leave, then stumbled across the court-yard to her pavilion.

Ancient Breasts, waiting on the veranda, caught sight of the girl's torn clothes. Hysterically, the old *amah* demanded what had happened.

"Never mind! Stop that screaming and take these torn things off me!"

With celerity, but not ceasing her exclamations or questions, the old woman undressed Helen, bathed, massaged and perfumed her delicate skin and clothed her in pajamas. But twenty minutes later, sitting on the bed combing the girl's hair, Ancient Breasts was still asking questions in her shrill voice.

Suddenly Helen rose and pushed her aside. "*Amah,* get me my riding habit and tell the *mafoo* to saddle Red Arrow!"

And in a few minutes, heedless of all protests, Helen set off in a gallop for the South City. At the Great Front Gate she was forced to draw rein. Thousands of Chinese in a hasty semblance of order were marching through the arch into the North City.

"To the President's palace! Down with the foreign plot! Punish the traitors!" shouted students sprinkled through the throng.

Helen reined in her champing horse a moment. Then, in desperation, she allowed Red Arrow to plunge into the human stream which choked the gateway.

"What!" protested a gaunt, pigtailed man

carrying a banner. "Would you trample us, you she-devil? Here, brothers, pull her off her horse!"

A close-cropped coolie seized her boot. She lashed him away with her whip. A student jumped and caught the bridle. Red Arrow reared and struck him down. Horse and rider plunged through the jam and careened madly along the great avenue.

Helen turned into Nun's Pilgrimage and galloped up to the lacquered front of the "Fecundant Virtue." The auditorium was now entirely dark. Two or three Peking policemen in white leggings patrolled unconcernedly in the moonlit street. On the slanting stone approach several score of young men in the uniforms of medical students were making stretchers of awning mats. A group of injured lay nearby, waiting.

All cast hasty glances at Helen as she dismounted. With terrified reticence she peered into the faces of the wounded.

"Where is Lang Dah-ren?" she asked, turning to a white-sleeved, close-cropped "medic."

He dropped his ball of hemp and looked her up and down.

"I don't know where they took the Wolf, but he is in a safe pen, you may be sure!" he answered with a sneer.

"Oh! and the other foreigners—the auburn-haired young man?"

"He is likewise cared for, I believe. But are you not the daughter of the Wolf," he said, coming closer. "How have you escaped?" He moved as though to grasp her arm.

"Take your hand away!" she cried, and struck him across the face with her quirt.

"Seize this vixen!" howled the medical student, rubbing his cheek and dancing with pain.

Other students, dropping the wounded, rushed up. They pinned her arms and dragged her, sobbing with anger, into the dark building. It had been cleared of the benches which she could dimly see piled up about the sides, but the ghastly wreck of the balcony lay strewn on the floor. Several students quickly bound her to one of the standing supports.

"What are we going to do with her?" inquired one, testing her bonds.

"We had better send word to the Little Chairman," suggested another.

"Who *is* the Little Chairman?" demanded Helen, striving for a necessary self-control. "She shall answer for this outrage!"

"A woman like yourself, miss," scornfully replied a student in English. "But a woman who sacrifices herself for our country, not our country for herself."

"Do you mean that vermilion-faced actress? Do you think she sacrifices so much!" exclaimed Helen in cuttingly direct Chinese.

"You don't know what sacrifice is, you pampered she-cub!" flared the student, still speaking in English.

"Hold your talk," advised a fellow, laying a hand on his arm. "The Wolf is caught. That is no reason for exchanging snarls with his cub! She's got liver for a woman! She came back here to look for her father, and such filial piety ought to be respected, even in the Wolf's she-cub. The Little Chairman herself would honor that! You remember how she herself held back from us so long because she did not wish to break with her own father. I wonder what he thinks now! Well, we all had to suffer!"

Helen bit her lips till they tasted of blood.

Oh, that these despised people should talk about her and treat her this way—to whom they had always proffered the most elegant of honorifics, the softest of tones, the humblest of miens!

In impotent fury she gave way irresistibly to the Oriental curses picked up in childhood from Ancient Breasts: "You fleas of a dog! Swines-hides! Mud-turtles' eggs!"

Then she stopped suddenly, ashamed and disgusted with the lack of intelligence in such a display.

Her baiter snorted softly through his nose.

"She-cub of a foreign Wolf, your fangs have no hurt. Display them as you wish!"

Her head began to swim. Was she about to faint? It seemed a rather delicious feeling, a relief from this nightmare. Her body drooped slowly . . . But the stumbling of hoofs on the stone approach of the auditorium roused her.

A heavy voice called in bad Chinese, "Who's here!" And against the faint light from the door Helen saw the huge figures, red turbans and beard-framed faces of a squad of British Sikh cavalry.

"Ah! So the foreign devils are setting their brown curs on us!" exclaimed the sarcastic 'medic,' arming himself with a pole from the débris. "If there is anything worse than a Wolf it is a Sikh dog! At them, comrades!"

A white-sleeved student jabbed one of the mounts with a stick. The animal, already nervous under the strange dark roof, reared and plunged.

A Sikh rider drew his pistol and fired a couple of shots. Nothing was more foolish. The horses went into a panic inside the building. One lurched against the pillar to which Helen was tied, her bonds alone saving her from being trampled to death. Several horses stumbled and fell over the débris, throwing and dragging their riders. One cavalryman became desperately engaged in trying to calm his mount. The three others jumped clear of their animals and clinging to the reins with one hand attempted to ward off the students' blows with the other.

Still unaccustomed to the darkness, the cavalrymen were entirely at a disadvantage. One went down beneath a heavy piece of timber, another was felled by the blow of a blunt

post in the stomach, while the third, a giant sergeant, had his gun knocked from his hand in a fight with six students at once and was tripped. The six students promptly sat on him.

In a few minutes the entire squad lay on the floor, bound and hog-tied with their own turbans and guarded by the young 'medics.' The swarthy Indians mixed earnest prayers to their deity with streams of curses upon their captives.

"Theirs be the sacrilege . . . verily we are turbanless among the defiled . . . our sacred coverings are removed and made into bonds by the heathen . . . slant-eyed progeny of beardless fathers, may you be made to eat the flesh of your ancestors in hell! . . ."

"Beardless fathers! Why, you hairy apes, if you were shorn a bit yourselves you would look more like men!" remarked the word-gifted 'medic' who sat on the head of the sergeant.

"Let's cut their whiskers off!" suggested one of his companions, with boyish glee. The Sikhs sputtered and squirmed with rage.

A more serious student protested.

"No! We've no time for such child's-play now. The wounded out there await us, and we will be needed elsewhere in the city before this night is over."

"But what shall we do with these hounds of the foreign devil?" questioned the talkative one. "We can't have them nipping at our heels, and we've no cells or jailers for them. I have heard that a Sikh shorn of his beard is harmless. This is surely a bloodless way to dispose of enemies. It's worth trying."

"Shear them, then! I have a scalpel!" cried a spectacled lad, drawing an emergency kit from his girdle pocket.

Several others held the hairy head of the sergeant while the scalpel wielder began hacking away at the Sikh's thick beard, which was rolled up the sides of his face and twisted together over his crown.

The Sikh prayed, cursed, moaned, howled, and finally broke into piteous sobbing.

Helen, tied to her post, forgot her own agony for a moment in that of the miserable soldier. She had been in India and knew the

real seriousness of what to these young students was no more than a prank. She cried vainly to them to stop.

Looking helplessly about she saw a tall figure in shapeless coolie garb darken the door and stride in. For a moment he peered through the darkness. Then he came closer.

"How! the Little Missie!" he exclaimed.

His hand felt down the pillar and touched her thongs. "Bound! What witchcraft is this, that you are tied here? Did you not just send me from your compound with a message to the British Minister?"

"Oh, Lau Dah!" she groaned, tugging at her bonds, "did you find the Minister—will he help?"

"The Minister is at the Western Hills, Missie—and all the Secretaries and the Foreign Commandant with him. There remained only the Sikh Captain of the guard and he ordered a squad of cavalry here. I followed as fast as I could on foot. The city is in an uproar. A patrol of students delayed me. You hadn't told me that they were concerned. Who tied you here, Little Missie! Didn't the Sikhs arrive? Perhaps they were

diverted—why, that's one bawling here, isn't it?"

He was untying the knots as rapidly as he could find them in the dim light.

"Yes, Lau Dah, the Sikhs are here! The medical students have tied them down and are cutting off their beards!"

He eased Helen to a seat on the floor, then sprang among the boys and pulled them away from their first victim.

"Who interferes?" cried one. "Tackle him!"

"Stop—by the Oath of the Bisected Square!" commanded Lau Dah pompously.

"What coolie is this who talks of the Oath?" they cried, peering at him.

"Look!" commanded the gateman, baring his left arm and striking a match. In the elbow was the florid rectangle with a line through it: the ideograph for *"joong"*. Above it was scratched similarly the two legs with a high hat pictograph— "big."

"The seal all right," they assented, "and a *dah* above. The sign of the old Secret Committee! But who are you, Elder Brother?"

"I am only the humble eyes of the Com-

mittee," Lau Dah replied in a low, confidential tone. "Of the Committee proper, the Little Chairman alone remains. Is she, I should like to know, aware of this demonstration tonight?"

"Aware! She started it. Where have you been?"

"I have been on a special mission. But if she is in control of it, well enough. What you are doing here, though, is useless. Your function is to bind up, not to kill."

"We are not killing. Will these dogs die of a shearing? At them, fellows! Whack off their braids and throw them out of here!" And the boy with the scalpel turned back to his former employment.

"Not so, Little Brother," exclaimed Lau Dah, seizing his arm. "To deal with men even to the matter of a hair, you should know their customs. The Master Confucius would teach you that much, if only you sought him a tenth as much as you seek the new learning. You know that if we Chinese lose face, we die by our own hands. It is so with these men! If they lose their beards they have face before

neither their God nor man. They will die by their own hands, for that is their religion. I have seen it!"

The Indian on whom operations had been begun sat up, doubling his head to the floor in gratitude.

"We gain no good by this action, brothers," went on Lau Dah. "These men are from the land of the Great Buddha whom we likewise honor. They will yet stand with us against the encroachments of the pink barbarians. Release them!"

Reluctantly the boys unbound first the semi-tonsured cavalryman. He sat up and felt tremulously for his beard. There was still enough left to twist to his ear. With relief and joy he stumbled away, babbling a prayer.

Lau Dah went to Helen, who was rising to her feet. "Come, Little Missie," he said. "You will find comfort in your compound."

"But my father—and—Elderborn Way!" she faltered, clutching his sleeve. She could restrain her tears no longer.

Lau Dah led her toward the door.

"You must return, Little Missie, and wait."

"But will not the Little Chairman desire her to be detained here?" demanded one of the students, seeking to bar their passage.

The old gateman wheeled and grasped his shoulder authoritatively. "The Little Chairman was once fed and clothed by the Foreign Miss. Shall not the Foreign Miss have protection now? I go with her; you get to your wounded there!"

In front of the lacquered doors they encountered a foreign gentleman in a monkey jacket, grime-covered and panting. It was the Military Attaché.

"I just got here!" he panted. "That infernal coolie—the one that pulled you—kept running and shouting after me! Pretty soon my man stopped and tried to tell me something. I tried to convey to him what a hurry I was in—and finally I took hold of him and shook him to make him understand. But he refused to pull me any further! So I had to run the whole distance and I lost my way! Is there anything I can do now?"

In spite of her misery, Helen had to laugh. "He only thought you were responsible for my fare, Captain," she said. "When he finds

you again you had better pay him if you don't want to be boycotted by the rickshaw men's guild! No, there is nothing you can do here. Thank you for coming—and for everything! I am going home with Lau Dah."

A figure crawled over from the side of the wall and grasped at her ankle. She jumped and raised the whip which still swung from her wrist. The Attaché sprang forward to grapple with the intruder.

"It's the *ganchedy!*" exclaimed Lau Dah.

"Why, Chauffeur! What's the matter?" asked Helen. Her heart seemed to stop.

"Little Missie, please forgive me! The students took the gas-cart, Little Missie! When I resisted they threw me into the road."

"Which way did they go?"

"Up the *hutung,* Little Missie. First they threw Great Man Lang, bound and tied, into it. His head was bleeding but he was struggling with them. They had the auburn-haired master, too—but he was not bound. He was lifted into the lap of a Chinese woman who was dressed like a lady of the Phoenix Court and gave commands."

"What is he saying?" asked the Attaché.

But Helen heard no more. The azure light in her lovely eyes had turned to darkness . . . her eyes saw nothing but darkness . . . a great bitterness filled her heart. . . .

"Take me home," she whispered faintly, leaning on Lau Dah's arm.

XII

HEAVEN-PEACE GATE

UTTERLY spent, Helen dropped on her bed. It was useless to undress. She would never sleep.

But finally, after hours of agonized tossing, she closed her eyes like a child, and her pitying old *amah* quietly tucked the mosquito netting under her mattress and turned out the light.

It was daybreak when the almost human wail of a camel woke her. For a moment she stared about her, dazed. Then she jumped up with a broken little cry of remembrance.

Hastily straightening her crumpled garments and hair she went to the gatehouse. Lau Dah was lying, mouth open, on his hard sleeping boards.

"Poor old fellow!" she muttered.

He sat up abruptly. "Who is there? Little Missie? I stand not presentable!"

"Keep your bed, Lau Dah. Did you learn when the British Minister would be home?"

"I stand not presentable! They said, today, Little Missie. Probably not before noon. Let down your heart until then!" He jumped up, holding his unbuttoned gown about him with his hands.

"Lau Dah, we must not lose time. Can we ask the police to help?"

"Little Missie, the police are imprisoned by the mob in their own bastile. I went out last night and saw."

She turned away.

"Then I will go to the President!"

"But they admit no women through the Heaven-Peace Gate. Besides, the students are there!"

"Do the students want to take me, too, Lau Dah?"

"They will not touch you again. It is your father they hate."

"Lau Dah, why do they hate father?"

"Because they believe he has betrayed them and is betraying our country, Little Missie."

She flushed with anger and stamped her foot.

"Oh, the ingrates! How can they say such a thing? Hasn't my father worked day and night for this country of theirs? I wish now we had never seen it! But—why did they take Way Ba-lee?" She trembled a little. "Was it—because he is their friend?"

"I understand not, Missie! Yes, he is their friend. I am sure no harm can befall him. The Little Chairman knows him."

"Yes! the Little Chairman. . . ." Her voice faltered. "Lau Dah, I shall go to the President. But I shall have to dress like a man! Wait here."

Heedless of his protests she sped to her father's quarters. She selected a plain duck suit, a low cut shirt and a pith helmet. The suit seemed to do well enough, although she had to draw it in several notches at the belt and it sagged at the shoulders. But her face . . . surely that delicate complexion would never pass! Suddenly she recalled some make-up she had used in an amateur theatrical. It was tucked away in the Treasury. She ran and found it, browned her face, and with nervous fingers pasted on a fairly creditable moustache.

"Not so bad," she decided, gazing into the mirror. "I can be the Norwegian Attaché!" Then she ran back to the gate.

"Ki mun!" She tried her lowest contralto. Lau Dah shook his head with a whimsical grimace.

"What is it? Won't I do?"

"A swan's neck on a goose," he said gently, with a gesture toward his own neck.

"Oh! Well, the morning is chilly. Give me your neck-fling, Lau Dah. . . . There!" She bowed almost gaily and thanked him. But her action caused the sun helmet to fall off. Her golden hair gleamed gloriously in the pale light.

"What if that should happen at Heaven-Peace Gate?"

She pondered a moment. Then she seized a pair of spindling hand-wrought scissors from the gateman's table. "Lau Dah!" she cried. "Will you cut my hair?"

"Oh, no, Little Missie!"

"Yes, yes! *Can't* you?"

"I might. I used to be a barber. I have cut *yang ren* hair."

"Then cut it—quickly!" And as though

afraid to hesitate, she dropped down on his cheap bamboo stool.

One by one the heavy tresses fell to the brick-paved floor. Helen gathered them up in hands that trembled.

"Just hair, Lau Dah!" she whispered, looking at him through long lashes silvered with tears. "Now I am going."

"And I with you, Little Missie."

"Say, Little Master!" she corrected, smiling.

There were no rickshaws and a long walk lay before them—the width of the Vermilion City. Sleepy-eyed, half-naked shop-keepers, who had not yet donned their upper garments, were taking down the shutters which made blank walls of their store fronts. The wheelbarrows of the scavengers, screeching under loads of night-soil, crowded all pedestrians to the wall. Helen knew just how long to hold her nose.

On the Great Avenue of the Hata Gate a patrol of Chinese boy scouts, pikes in the air, barred their way temporarily. And as they crossed the avenue into the narrow *hutung* beyond, a group of students entered, armed

with paste and freshly-printed posters to be attached to the picturesque sign-boards of the somewhat reluctant shop-keepers. A little further on, the Shandoong Guild House, built like a temple, stood silent within its fantastically curved wall. In the "rounded-V" entryway a knot of young men and women talked animatedly, and several boy scouts stood guard with their pikes.

"The students seem to have taken this for their headquarters," said Lau Dah, embracing the scene with a gesture. "They have undisputed control of the city!"

Soon the "Norwegian Attaché" and servant emerged into the Great Avenue of the Carved Bridges and Flying Columns, fronting the imperial enclosure. The eastern end of that sacred compound, still occupied by the boy ex-emperor, showed no signs of life. But the great gateway of the central portion, appropriated at the fall of the dynasty for a public park and library, evidenced more activity. Here and there girl students, in tam-o'shanter caps and fine cloth shoes, with red knitted shawls thrown about their shoulders, paced arm in arm. A vendor toting a "barrel" char-

coal stove on one end of his pole and a red-lacquered cup-board on the other passed from group to group.

"Have a stayer, Foreign Grandfather! he begged, accosting Helen, and setting his portable restaurant down on the stone flagging.

Lau Dah bought a pot of water and some hard cakes. "I carry my own tea-leaves," he explained to the pedlar, fishing in his girdle. "You fellows hold a man up! Little Master, will you not eat a drop?"

"No, thank you!"

"Here, you will like this!" He grasped a wire dangling from the pedlar's stove and hooked a fragrant sweet potato that hung above the coals. Dexterously he wrapped a bit of cabbage leaf about it.

"Eat, Ancient Sir!" he urged, bowing to her whimsically.

Munching, they went on toward the western end of the great enclosure—now the seat of the Cabinet Offices and Executive Mansion. The triple roof of the Great Peace Gate towered among the ancient trees.

"See the crowd there!" exclaimed Helen, pointing excitedly.

Before the gate, the avenue broadened into a great plaza, several acres in extent. A green lattice barrier, extending from the drab double row of gatehouses, fenced off a portion of it—and beginning far outside that barrier, surging against it and flowing through gaps into it, was a vari-colored mass of humanity which squatted and lay on felt pallets. A few individuals were rolling their beds and departing, but others were straggling in to take their places. Here and there men sat up and stretched their arms, straightened out their Chinese costumes, or pulled down their foreign-style trouser legs, bawling to steamed-towel venders who picked their way among the pallets. Coppers were flung carelessly in payment. Others held up tea-pots, which go along with every function in China—be it marriage, funeral, or revolution—to receive boiling water served precariously above the heads of the reclining multitude.

Bedraggled banners of paper and cloth, hastily inscribed with huge characters, hung from nearby light poles. "SAVE OUR COUNTRY," "DOWN WITH FOREIGN LORDSHIP," "ABOLISH THE NE-

FARIOUS TREATY," "EXTERMINATE THE TRAITORS," they read. One lone streamer, flung askew over the trellis next the gatehouse, proclaimed: "TEAR OUT THE FANGS OF THE WOLF."

Here and there were to be seen groups in students' uniforms: the boys in drab or blue or grey, European style, with cadet collars; the girls in tight-fitting black jackets, with green or lavender trousers, some with skirts and some without, according to the fashion of their particular schools. But the bulk of the crowd were Chinese of every class and costume who mingled promiscuously: fat merchants in silks, apprentice boys in ragged blue cotton, lean professors wearing tortoise shell glasses, dapper young clerks in European dress and straw hats, coolies in thick-soled cloth shoes or barefoot, conspicuous for their short pants and baggy trousers, and even beggars in their wrappings of unspeakable rags tied on with twisted grass. All rubbed shoulder to shoulder in a silent, dogged purpose.

"Why, I never saw Chinese mingled like that before!" remarked Helen, as they came to the edge of the mob. "There, hunched up on

that mat, is the fat old compradore from father's bank! I know him from the way his eyebrows grow together! And next to him—see!—sits a man in scavenger's uniform. Even a group of Lama priests in their yellow robes! What are they all——?"

"The Hundred Surnames have joined!" interrupted Lau Dah triumphantly, flinging up his arms with joy. "The *Da Dzoong Toong* will be forced to listen to us now! *Wan Show!* Ten Thousand Years to our Country! *Wan Show!*" He shouted with happiness.

The rising sun burst over Coal Hill, the artificial mountain in the northeast corner of the sacred enclosure, and flooded the golden roofs of the palaces behind the great gate with ripples of dazzling glory. The occasional purple and turquoise roofs and the green tops of the ancient trees stood out like islets in a sea of fire.

A cadaverous figure jumped to his feet waving his arms toward the light. "The night has passed!" he boomed. "The new day has dawned for our nation. The day of glory has dawned. *Wan Show—Wan Show!*"

The throng rose like a surging wave. "*Wan*

Show, Wan Show!" came from twenty thousand husky throats. Hundreds of recruits hurried to swell it, burying the disguised foreign girl and her escort in a vast gesticulating multitude.

More and more student leaders pushed along through the sea of heads upon the backs of their comrades. Armed with megaphones made of newspapers they cheered the crowd on. Then, from within the trellised enclosure, relayed from leader to leader, came a call for silence.

Gradually the shouting was stilled by the perspiring announcers.

"The President states—," the message was being relayed, "—the President states to the committee which has been with him through the night, that the Foreign Minister will be dismissed if the Hundred Surnames desire. But he refuses to abrogate the treaty with Japan. He denies that it contains traitorous clauses. He demands upon threat of military force that the people withdraw their siege of the palace at once and allow him to get in touch with his Foreign Adviser and the Diplomatic Corps——"

Voices interrupted. The announcers with the megaphones demanded silence.

"One word more: The Committee of Patriots and citizens have served ultimatum on the President that the populace will sit day and night at his gates until the edict abolishing the treaty and ordering trial for the traitors is posted. They have informed him that peaceful methods will be met by peaceful methods, but violence by violence. If the Patriots, students and Hundred Surnames substantiate the words of their representatives, let there be noise!"

A terrific shout went up. Banners waved frantically. The mob pressed forward.

Helen clutched Lau Dah's arm, struggling to make him hear through the din. He recovered his composure with an effort, and pulled her to the protection of a telegraph pole.

"But I want to reach the gate!" she shouted in his ear.

"You can never get through the crowd there!"

"*Shih, shih-kan:* Try, try-see!" She pulled away from him.

Gently but firmly Lau Dah squeezed her arm, as if by that means he wished to impress a realization of the situation upon her mind. He bent to her ear. "Little Missie, the President cannot help himself. If you reached him, how could he help you?"

Helen looked at him from under her big sun-helmet with eyes which showed the disappointment of a slowly abandoned hope.

"Then get me out, Lau Dah! I must wait for the British Minister. No help is to be had from the Chinese. Are *you* with me, Lau Dah?"

He hesitated a moment, gazing at her sorrowfully. "Little Missie, for my country's sake I ought to remain here. But I serve you with love-heart. Master Way pledged me to guard you as my life. Yes, I am with you, Little Missie. Let us go, then."

"Master Way pledged you. . . ?"

Again the tumult interrupted them. "Quickly! Follow me—if you would leave here!" said Lau Dah, elbowing a passage toward the rear.

A new cry arose from the farthest edge of the crowd.

"The Little Chairman comes! The Muh Lan of today!"

A flying wedge of students opened the crowd.

"Make way, please! Make way for the Little Chairman. You have the honor to give place! We thank you to yield!"

Lau Dah and the "Norwegian Attaché" found themselves squarely in their path.

"Ah, a *yang ren* here!" exclaimed the leader of the students, grasping Helen's arm. "Aside, friend foreigner, for our heroine! You move willingly I am sure—foreign gentlemen are very chivalrous!—especially when the heroine is lovely," he added ironically.

Along the aisle which had been opened by this vanguard marched an impromptu band of school boys playing the national air on half-mastered brass instruments. "For Four Thousand Years without Peer—" they sang shrilly, and the mob left off cheering to take up the national anthem.

Next, in rickshaws, came a group of overdressed girls, who might have been recognized as Muskhair and the "Blossoms." They

were escorted by the dour old dramatic tutor on a fuzzy Mongol pony.

Then came an eight-bearer sedan chair, evidently requisitioned from a marriage and funeral caterer. The red curtains had been dropped and inside, clinging to a support, stood Moonlady, in plain green student jacket and skirt. A flush mantled her cheeks, and she bowed her acknowledgment of the acclaim of the throng.

Separate groups of students pressed forward out of the crowd, waving banners and calling the names of their schools.

Moonlady waved her hand to one group.

"Law School, Patriots!" she called.

The crowd cheered.

"National University, Patriots!"

Cheers again.

"Girl's Normal, Patriots!"

A mighty shout went up.

She began picking individuals out of the crowd. "You, Elder Brother,—your honorable calling?" She was pointing to a loosely-garbed, cropped-haired fellow. The students relayed her question to him through the din.

"Chamberboy," he admitted reluctantly.

"Chamberboy, Patriot!" announced Moonlady, and the crowd repeated her words.

She chose another and then another. "Tinsmith, Patriot. . . . Coffin-maker, Patriot! We may need your services before we triumph!" she cried.

"Public story-teller, Patriot!—you can help greatly," she continued. "Go to the country markets with *this* story."

Followers of vocations not yet announced pressed forward for recognition. A tattered fellow came up with a bowl. "Beggar, Patriot!" Moonlady called, pointing him out. The audience giggled.

With an indignant frown the beggar leaped upon a rung of Moonlady's chair.

"You laugh!" he said to the crowd. "But since our country is being bought with Japanese money, we beggars refuse to accept a Japanese coin! Cover me with it and I will crawl out and leave it. If the rest of you are as faithful as a poor beggar. . . ." The crowd cheered. Bystanders tossed some cash into his bowl, and pulled him down.

"Oh, there is a foreign gentleman here!"

exclaimed Moonlady, catching sight of Helen. "Many foreigners in our country deserve the name of Patriots too! Why, our old Patriot Lau Dah is with him! Another convert of yours, Lau Dah? From what country do you bring us sympathy, Elegant Foreign Sir?"

The crowd pressed toward Helen to hear the answer. She hid her face under her sun-helmet, clenching her fists helplessly. Lau Dah interposed.

"He comes from Norway, Patriots! A little West-land that greatly loves liberty! My honorable master comes to express his nation's sympathy."

While the bystanders cheered, Lau Dah nudged Helen desperately.

"Control your spleen!" he whispered. "Doff your hat and bow! They expect foreigners to doff the hat!"

Regaining possession of herself with an effort, Helen raised her helmet.

"*Wan Show*—Ten thousand years to our foreign friends!" shouted those about her, lifting Helen to their shoulders. Lau Dah steadied her anxiously and looked about for some avenue of retreat.

"That is good! Not all foreigners are our enemies," said Moonlady, drawing the crowd's attention to herself again. "Lau Dah," she went on, addressing him confidentially, "we have lost sight of you lately. I would like to see you soon."

He nodded, trying to shield the trembling English girl from too close an inspection. Then Moonlady's chair moved on.

Helen was lowered into Lau Dah's arms. "Oh, this awful crowd! Can't we get out?" she breathed tremulously.

But the mob closed in upon them in the wake of Moonlady's chair. Each minute it was increased by hundreds of spectators who came from the crowded *hutungs* to south, east and west. After a long struggle to free themselves, the two were as deeply submerged as ever. Helen was growing faint. Then fortune cast them against an empty rickshaw, which, with its puller, had been caught in the human flood.

Lau Dah gratefully pushed his "Norwegian gentleman" inside, and somehow they contrived to stay behind the shelter of one of the marble "tongue-of-flame" columns lining the avenue.

"We had best hold our ground, Little Missie, until the crowd thins out."

Here they remained for a half hour, the human tide eddying about them. From her high perch, Helen saw Moonlady's sedan chair working its way toward the latticed enclosure. The triumph of the Chinese girl who had once offered to be her slave filled her with a bitterness in which anger, self-rebuke and fear were mingled.

Five-striped flags and printed resolutions were passed overhead from hand to hand, under the direction of the student leaders, who, perched above the throng, held all these people to a conscious objective. Now and then some patriotically inspired individual would mount the shoulders of his neighbors to harangue those within reach of his voice. Bursts of song came from various portions of the multitude, now a half mile in breadth. Their melodies rose to shrill falsetto climaxes, and the stamping of many feet beat a terrifying rhythm.

"Can't we get out? Is there no way?" Helen pleaded, leaning towards Lau Dah. "Oh, what may not be happening to father! And Barrie! I wonder if the American

Attaché has thought to notify the American Minister of his abduction!"

"Patience, Little Missie. There is no method but to wait. The crowd will thin out soon."

"Look, Lau Dah!" cried Helen in terror, pointing back. "Soldiers are coming down the Great Avenue!"

Lau Dah jumped up to the hub of the rickshaw.

"Great Ancestors! Gendarmes again! Oh, the dogs! . . . the fleas of dogs!"

"Gendarmes, gendarmes!"

A great cry went through the throng.

It surged, swayed, and fronted about. The student leaders jumped to the backs of their comrades, waving megaphones.

"Fellow-citizens! Chinese! Patriots!" they bawled. "The coward *Dzoong Toong* sends his gendarmes! Hold down your livers. Stand your ground. This time we will not act like children in a dark alley. We are the Hundred Surnames of the nation. They dare not attack us! Stand ground!"

A group of students separated themselves from the crowd and fell into protective for-

mation. But the gendarmes marched on—and at one hundred paces they unslung their rifles.

"Oh, this will be a shambles!" sobbed Helen, hiding her face in her hands. "These people cannot get away nor protect themselves!"

"Place the heart, Little Missie. They do not come as if they were going to attack!" Lau Dah's voice was very assuring. "Steady there, puller—hold steady! Be confident, Missie. It takes hot iron to pierce even wax. Those fellows are not hot!"

The regiment halted fifty paces from the students. An anxious silence fell upon the multitude.

The commanding officer stepped forward. "The *Da Dzoong Toong* appreciates the patriotic fervor of the Hundred Surnames," he announced in the approved "military voice that can be heard between mountains." "He is glad to have you remain at his gates. He is willing that you should lend the weighty support of your presence to his constant endeavors to uphold our naton's dignity and protect its sovereignty. But he warns that your hot-heartedness must not interrupt state business. He requires that an aisle be kept open before

the Great Gate for the free exit and entry of his messengers and guests. We come to open such a way. I command you to fall back as my men advance!"

A terse order narrowed his column to eight abreast. "Forward!" he commanded.

The students rushed to block the way. One turned to the crowd, raising his hand. "No path shall be opened," he shrieked. "No path shall be opened for the President until he meets our demands. Patriots, stand!"

Numbers of townsmen twisted furtively out of the crowd and fled. Groups of uniformed students, shouting defiance, filled the spaces they had vacated in the line of charge.

"Oh, Lau Dah! The soldiers are body to body with the students!" Helen took her hands from her eyes and gazed in fearful fascination at the dramatic spectacle. "They are trying to push them along with their guns. Now the girls are coming forward from the side! What are they going to do?"

"Bayonets!" ordered the commanding officer, his voice cracking suddenly like a whip. The soldiers half-heartedly unsheathed their great knives and fitted them to their guns.

"What's wrong with you mud-turtles?" The officer was furious. "Advance! Charge them!"

"No liver!" grunted Lau Dah, crawling higher upon the fender of the rickshaw. "Lots of the gendarmes themselves are infected with the Patriots' teaching. Did you see that fellow let a student snatch away his gun? This peril is past!"

"But the officers are driving them!" cried Helen. "See that one striking the soldiers with his sword! Oh! . . . they are plunging their bayonets into the boys! Other students are rushing up where those fell. Have they no fear? I cannot bear this, Lau Dah!"

Suddenly the action became portentously quiet. The multitude which crowded about the immediate vicinity of the scrimmage had become passive. Save for the slinking away of some of the timid-hearted, and the pushing forward of the student groups, there was no movement.

In high disdain, the soldiers kicked their bleeding victims to one side. Helen sickened at the sight. Her face was wet with tears of anguish.

"There will be help enough soon, Little Missie. Rest your heart. Better you do not look longer. Drop down in the seat."

"The girls are rushing up—see the girls, Lau Dah! They are crowding ahead of the boys! They are grasping the soldiers' guns! Look, the gendarmes are hesitating. One of them has even knocked a gun out of his comrade's hand! They refuse to stab the girls! They are turning back, Lau Dah—they are threatening their own officers!"

"Their liver is gone!" shouted a student, leaping high in ecstasy. The crowd repeated his words hysterically. "Their liver is gone! *Wan Show* for the Patriots! *Wan Show* for the Little Sisters! *Wan Show!*"

Two boys raised aloft the body of a student whose head dropped back almost severed, and whose neck still spurted blood.

"Revenge!" shouted the crowd, pressing forward. "At them!"

Helen slipped down in her seat, covering her eyes in horror.

"Out of here, *lachedy,*" commanded Lau Dah, slapping the rickshaw puller to his senses.

"This way! It is thin to the side there. Quick —push through!"

The voice of the commanding officer rose once more above the tumult. "Right about face! Back to your barracks, you deserters! Afraid of girls? I'll coddle you with scorpions. Bowl along, you turtles' eggs!"

A great sob of relief rose from the crowd, seemed to hover a moment in mid-air, then faded the azure reaches of the sky.

XIII

FROM THE BELLY OF LAUGHING BUDDHA

HELEN dragged herself wearily from the compound gate to her pavilion and took off her masculine make-up. Ancient Breasts, in great excitement over her prolonged absence, received another shock when she saw the shorn head.

"Little Missie, I can't get through it—I can't get through it," she protested. "Let but another thing happen to you and this old heart will explode."

Helen turned impulsively and threw both arms around the old woman.

"These are hard days for you, *Lau Ma,*" she sobbed. "But they are worse for me. My poor father is lost—perhaps injured! Oh, how can I find him?"

She dropped her head on the bony old shoulder and made a tired little gesture like a child's.

The *amah* stroked the girl's soft cheeks and touched her wet lashes with reverent fingertips.

"His Greatness Lang must be found," crooned the old woman. "But there are others to do the searching, my precious one! Master Way Ba-lee is clever in Chinese affairs. Does he know about all this?"

Helen struggled bravely for composure. "Master Way is taken too, Ancient Nourisher! He is gone from me also—and I feel so helpless!"

Ancient Breasts started suddenly. "I think of it . . . the Minister of the Great Brave Country is in the Grand Hall waiting to see you. Lau Dah wasn't here—I took him there to wait. He will assist you!"

"Why you old stupid! Help me into a dress, quickly! And give me that cap to cover my head."

Helen found the British Envoy Extraordinary pacing back and forth among the curios, twisting his dark moustache.

"Miss Langdon!" he said abruptly, coming toward her, "Don't you think it is a bit reckless of you to go out alone after what has hap-

pened to your father? Please remember that we are responsible for your safety. When I heard of the impudent affair of last night I hurried here immediately. I hope you have suffered no ill effects!"

"Thank you, Your Excellency, I am quite all right. And as for going out alone, I was seeking help from the Chinese."

"Where has Colonel Langdon been taken—have you any clue?"

"Only the report of the chauffeur, who saw them driven eastward on Nun's Pilgrimage."

"*Them?* Was some one with him?"

"Yes, he and Mr. Weston were taken together."

"That young American Weston? H'm." The Minister gave his moustache a vigorous twirl. "And were the students the only instigators of the assault?"

"The students and their woman leader whom they call the 'Little Chairman.' She ordered the attack from the stage. It was very sudden, but I believe she planned it to capture us. She wrote Mr. Weston inviting him to come and asked particularly that he bring me. But if she was really aiming at father, I don't quite

understand . . . it was by the merest accident that he went with us to the play."

"She could strike at your father through you. That would be very Chinese. But she got *you* there through Weston, eh! . . . This will require considerable thought. May I be seated?"

Helen made him comfortable and ordered a whiskey and soda. The Minister settled back and continued to twist his long-suffering moustache.

"That chap Weston . . ." he said thoughtfully. "You introduced him at the garden party a year ago, I believe. You have known him fairly intimately?"

Helen flushed. "Yes, Your Excellency."

"My Chinese Secretary tells me that he has been in the confidence of that misguided student organization known as the 'Patriots.' I wonder if your father knew it?"

"Yes, father knew. He strongly disapproved, but said Mr. Weston would get over such ideas. They quarrelled about it once, so agreed never to talk politics."

"Ah. When leaders of the 'Patriot' organization were put out of the way following that

attack on the Foreign Office, the chairman of their self styled 'Inner Committee,' a girl, escaped. She was known to be hiding somewhere in the South City. Now she appears as a stage star! Very dramatic! Can you recall any hint of Weston's having been in communication with her?"

Helen lowered her eyes. "No—except the letter from her which I mentioned. Do you actually think——?"

The Minister straightened up and let go of his moustache for a moment. "I think this, Miss Langdon—and surely since last night you must have suspected it yourself—that a conspiracy was planned against your father in which you were made a pawn. You have been associating with a man who has been in league with this Chinese girl and has sold your father to a coterie of jealous young desperadoes!"

Helen was trembling, but her eyes were very bright with the fire of a great anger. She would allow nobody to say these things about Barrie.

"I do not believe that!" she said evenly.

The Minister picked up the soda siphon. "I'm afraid you will have to, Miss Langdon."

"Little Missie!" Lau Dah was speaking from the door. "The American Attaché has come. He has followed me in."

"Jeeow ta lie!" Helen arose. "I'm glad you came, Captain! I believe you have met His Excellency. He was just saying that he suspects Mr. Weston of being a party to father's abduction last night! Surely *you* don't believe that!"

"No . . . that is . . . it is difficult to believe." The American Attaché glanced uncomfortably at the British Minister. "I never saw him, of course, before he called and invited me to join the party. But I'll say this—he fought off your attackers and urged me to flee with you! He could have escaped too, but turned back to help your father."

"You see? What you have been saying is impossible!" cried Helen, turning to the Minister.

He shrugged his shoulders. "I am sure the gentleman had the decency to want *you* to escape!" he said, embarrassed. "But as for his failure to take the opportunity to get away —perhaps there was no necessity!"

He picked up his glass and studied it abstractedly, then resumed:

"I can't help being convinced that the quickest way to find Colonel Langdon's place of detention is to trace young Weston. We can get no help from the Chinese police—they all joined the students this morning! And you know what shape the Chinese government is in. At any rate, I have asked the American Minister to authorize search of Weston's premises. We may find some clue as to the location of this den of 'patriots.' His Excellency will be waiting in Sweet Rain Hutung for me by now."

He stood up. "I will bring you anything I may find—if you will promise to stay here. In fact, I must forbid you to leave the premises again without guard. I shall order a squad of Sikh troopers to protect your gate."

"Thank you—I shall inform Lau Dah!" said Helen faintly. "Good day, Your Excellency."

The Minister bowed and turned to the Attaché. "Would you like to come along, Captain?"

Both took their leave. Helen watched them go, then sank down on the divan.

It was in this seat that Weston had promised nothing should ever again come between them. . . . Her face burned and she clenched her hands, struggling against the beginning of a doubt which lay upon her heart like lead.

An hour later Lau Dah admitted a somber party. The British Minister came first, followed by the American Minister and the Military Attaché. A small retinue of Sikhs under the command of a British officer brought up the rear. Lau Dah escorted them to the "Treasury."

Almost too weary to be afraid Helen rose to receive them.

"I am sorry to have kept you in suspense, Miss Langdon," said the British Minister, bowing stiffly, "but we had to send for half a regiment to quell that brute of a dog Weston keeps in his compound. We found no clue to the young man's whereabouts. We can only offer a reward for information, and also announce that the British Government will hold your father's captors personally responsible for his safety. But we did find something at Weston's which looks suspicious."

He signalled to his officer who stood in the portico. The man came in, gingerly carrying a small porcelain idol.

"This was on his mantel," said the Minister. "Possibly you know it?"

"Yes," said Helen. "It's the funny little idol that Mr. Weston and I got in the Dragon Temple Market one day. Why did you take that?"

The Minister turned the idol upside down and struck it with his palm. A tiny jade tube fell out.

He showed it to Helen. "See, on this side, *joong*—that's the cryptic character of the Patriots. Here on the other side *yüeh*—'moon'—a symbol I am not informed about. But look at this!" and he pushed out the tiny scroll with his finger, "Can you read these characters?"

Helen unrolled it. "Yes, I think I can—they're simple," she said slowly. "It's poetry:

> " '*Wet sand, fleet cloud, an aching urge to fly*
> *Stars, singing of ethereal things.*
> *But I could only gaze into the sky . . .*
> *Then you . . . and wings!*'

"'To the Foreign Brother, the Precious One, who saved the Little Chairman and now helps the Patriots save their country: in souvenir of a meeting.

"'Fifth moon, Nineteenth night.'"

"The very night . . ." she murmured. "The night of the storm!"

Dazedly she lifted her eyes from the writing. Somewhere within her mind, within her heart, a great door seemed to swing shut, blotting out the future.

"Your Excellency is right," she said slowly, steadily. "Mr. Weston has deceived me and conspired against my father. I can plead for him no longer. He should be punished."

The venerable American Minister leaned forward.

"In that case," he said, "Weston has forfeited his right to diplomatic protection. I must say, he disregarded my advice or he would not have gotten into this. I shall issue a proclamation that he must appear before me and explain or have all protection withdrawn. That should drive him to us. Then, with him in hand, we shall soon find Adviser Langdon."

He paused and looked sympathetically at Helen.

"How you suffer, dear child! Accept my sympathy! Now, if you will swear an accusation as basis for my action I will publish the summons at once."

The British Minister rose. "Sir, I thank you for your whole-hearted cooperation," he said briefly. "Miss Langdon, His Excellency has suggested the most likely plan for finding your father. . . . Could her deposition be taken right here, Your Excellency?"

"The Attaché will take it—will you not, Captain? Any official of the Legation, you know. I never do it personally."

"There should be paper in the Adviser's study. May we go in?" asked the British Minister. Helen nodded, and he threw open the door.

A furtive Chinese with octagonal glasses sat bending over some work at Langdon's desk.

"Amanuensis, will you give us the room a moment?" said Helen. The Chinese sidled bowing through the tiny door beyond, glancing slyly at the foreign officials. Then, with a

suggestion or two from the British Minister, the charge was drawn up, and the Attaché, distress in his eyes at Helen's evident suffering, received her oath.

The men took their leave.

At the door the Attaché turned back. "Miss Langdon, I can't believe it—even now! A betrayer would not have acted as Weston did!" He looked at her a moment, understandingly, then turned away and followed his Minister.

Helen steadied herself a moment, leaning upon the desk. But the reaction was too great. With a sob she sank to the floor, covering her face with her hands. For a moment the room seemed to be filled with a strange light . . . with phantoms and old memories . . . then with darkness. . . .

An eternity later, she felt the affectionate arms of Ancient Breasts trying to lift her. "Come, my downy one," the old woman was crooning. "Come and expand yourself. I have made your bed in blue."

XIV

CARES OF STATE

IN the little compound next to the Temple of Tang the Brilliant, Moonlady held court. With the tact and poise of her race Muskhair had stepped into a secondary position, and the Blossoms, uncomprehending but loyal, became proud ladies-in-waiting.

In the guest-hall a group of business-like chairs had displaced the colorful divans. Over the niche containing the jade image of the Elegant Tang, hung the five-striped flag of the Republic. The guest tables in front of it were covered with neat piles of letters and telegrams.

Behind the one in the center sat the Little Chairman, dressed in severe black. Her tapering fingers toyed with a huge ivory seal carved with the bisected square, which stood in a crystal bowl of red pigment.

A slender young man in a white-sleeved uniform entered and doffed his white cap in a distinctly western salute.

"What report have you this morning about your patients, Dr. Ching?" she asked him.

"The older foreigner is getting very restless, Little Chairman. I fear that he will break the cast off his shoulder. The other patient is still delirious, although he sleeps more today."

"Does the Wolf talk?"

"Oh, quite a deal, Little Chairman—and swears some, too, I assure you. These foreigners express dissatisfaction by flinging about the names of their gods. It would be a welcome relief should Lang throw a few insinuations at my grandmother like a civilized angry Chinese."

Moonlady smiled. "White men are not far removed from the tree-dwellers, Brother Ching. But they have their good points. Do all you can for Way See'en Sung, doctor. We are waiting until Master Way's mind clears to question the Wolf. Report again at noon, please. And send Woo here."

She turned to eye the great green cockateel

which sat on a stand beside her—the only dash of brilliant color in the room. Presently the young man whom she had summoned to her in the theater appeared.

"Woo," she commanded, "keep a special guard over the Wolf. Dr. Ching tells me he is getting very active."

"That I truly know. He just offered me a thousand dollars to help him escape. 'If you should give up all you have extorted from our country,' I told him, 'you would not get out of here until we have examined you.' 'Then will you find out if my daughter is safe and take a message to her that I am alive?' he asked. 'I'll see,' I replied. Now what say you, Little Chairman?"

"It would be unwise to undertake such communication now, Woo. Let the she-cub's heart hang up!" And she pursed her lips at her bird.

"The auburn-haired foreigner is moving his limbs today," said Woo. "Do you wish him left here in your compound?"

"Yes, he shall remain in my boudoir. He is a guest, Woo, not a prisoner. Simply see that he does not wander off! By the way,

what have you done with the Wolf's gas-cart? They might trace it."

"I ran it out the South Gate, and into a friend's family mausoleum."

He withdrew. A boy scout entered, saluted and drew from his bosom a sheaf of papers. "The headquarters in the Shandoong Guild House refer these to the Little Chairman."

She took them and read one by one.

"We are with you to the last drop of blood. We have persuaded the merchants' guilds of Shanghai to close shop until the traitors are dismissed from the Cabinet. Continue your brave siege of the government offices. Your deed will go down to immortality.—Student Union of Shanghai."

"We are forwarding money. Let your hearts not cool until our country is ten parts saved from the twin menace of the pirates outside and the traitors inside.—Canton Student Union."

"A general strike will bring the President to terms and make him see the villainy of his

Ministers. Meanwhile continue your pressure. The province of the Great Sage blesses you.—Federation of Guilds of Shandoong Province, Dzeenan"

Her heart leaped. The guilds were rallying! The movement of the Patriots would succeed!

She opened another telegram. What was this!

"The Women's Student Association of Tientsin will back the Patriots on condition that you declare for co-education, enfranchisement of women, love-marriage, and abolition of concubinage. The General Student Union of Tientsin has approved our program which we are publishing today. Freedom for women, as well as for our country, is our demand. Please wire your stand at once."

"*Lee 'ow day!*" Moonlady frowned. "Starflower!" she called to the girl bringing in tea, "please send for the Committee right away."

She began perusal of some hastily written reports which underlay the telegrams. "More trouble!" she thought.

"The Peking Student Headquarters are informed that the Japanese Minister recommended foreign intervention to support the President before the Diplomatic Corps meeting last night. Japan, he said, would supply sufficient troops to suppress the student rowdyism if the other Powers would give moral support. The British Minister advised forbearance for a few days until issues become more clear, with, however, the issuance of a warning to all parties that foreign lives and property must be protected. He was backed by the French *Chargé d'Affaires* and the Italian Minister. The American Minister stated as usual that he must refer all proposals to his government. The Corps adopted the British suggestion."

"Our enemies are scheming desperately to save their game of treachery," murmured Moonlady. "America, I think, will not consent to the Japanese intervention policy. But if the British give support, it will proceed. Oh, if our China only had a united, modern army we would not have cause to fear! We

must expose the Wolf to his own people—and quickly!"

She turned to the next report, reading it slowly.

"Most of the provincial *Doo-jwins* and local mandarins are declaring neutrality in the struggle between the populace and the President. The carrier's guild refused to pay octroi tax at the city gates today, maintaining that a true democracy should abolish taxes. . . . The capital police demanded their pay from the Minister of Finance. Being unable to meet their demands, he fled. They now come to us, arguing that since they stood by the students we must provide for them. The secretaries at Patriots' Headquarters have pacified them temporarily by promise of an answer tomorrow."

Moonlady put down the despatches and dropped her head in her hands. The battle had only begun! Why did General Gwan not arrive? Was it because she had offended him? But surely he would put the Cause before all else.

She went out, crossed the courtyard, and tiptoed into what had been her boudoir. Weston lay asleep there, quite still save for the occasional parting of his lips or the twitching of a finger. He was very pale. With an expression of tenderness and remorse, Moonlady gazed down at him for a long time.

A clamoring at the gate broke her reverie. She went out quietly and stood by the tile-mosaic spirit-screen with its green-scaled, white-bellied dragon swallowing a purple sun.

"Brothers and sisters of the student committee," she cried in welcome, as the gaunt old gentlewoman admitted five young men and two young women, "I congratulate you upon the progress of the Cause. But much remains to be done!"

"You are the one to be congratulated," they answered politely. "You resurrected our Sacred Cause. *Goong shec—goong shee.*"

Moonlady returned their bows with queenly modesty, and led them to the guest hall. "Please seat yourselves," she invited. "Starflower! Clovescent! Open tea. Now to business! I think the proposal from the Tientsin women should receive our first consideration."

A youth with cropped hair, dark spectacles, deep-sunk eyes and a protruding chin read the telegram aloud. The Committee members glanced nervously from one to the other.

"I'm for helping the women," said the reader, when he had finished, "but haven't we work enough saving the country just at this time? The Hundred Surnames are following us uncertainly as it is. Add the abolition of betrothal contracts to our program and we will assuredly scare them back to cover. Already we suffer slurs regarding the 'public commingling' in our demonstrations—although fortunately thus far our enemies have hit upon no scandal, save possibly the sudden vogue among girl students for bobbed hair and bare knees. In my opinion," he concluded, turning to the girl members, "you ought to keep your trouser hems down until this movement gets a drop better established."

"Hold, Brothers," exclaimed one of the young women. "I know not what enthusiasm you expect our sex to exhibit over liberating the country, if we women are to remain as much in slavery as ever. We are not a factor

to ignore. Who was it saved the situation at Heaven-Peace Gate?"

"Come!" interrupted the Little Chairman firmly. "We will have no quarrel over this. Would the Tientsin Sisters be content if we should declare now for co-education and the abolition of concubinage, leaving the questions of love-marriage and enfranchisement for later action?"

"That would be a fair compromise for the time being."

"Are the brothers agreed? Then so much for that! More serious things demand attention."

She read the remaining telegrams and despatches. "I suggest that the money arriving from Canton and Shandoong be paid over to the police. I hope to extort a confession from the Wolf—an account of his double-dealing and his forgery of the treaty document—which will turn foreign sentiment. For the rest we must put our hope in the Shansee General."

"Where is he now?"

"The last advice he sends is that he has collected coal cars to transport his troops. He

dares not move too obviously for fear of checkmate from the Manchurian General, who is under the influence of our enemy, the Wolf. He is secretly entraining his men within the mines behind Cloud-Cliff Grottos and when the cars are loaded he can descend upon the capital in one day."

"A clever scheme. He lacks not stuff!" The boys raised their thumbs in enthusiastic approbation.

"But may he be prompt!" added their Chairman.

She made a gesture of dismissal, and the members rose. As they filed out one turned and said to her: "Here is a fat slice! It is bitten off that the officers of Gendarmerie are demanding all arrears in double upon threat to sack the city."

"May the pigs roast in the flames of their lust!" Moonlady's low voice trembled. "But there is still a seed of humanity in the men. Do what you can to nourish it!"

Weston's eyes opened upon the paper-covered lattice-work, which he took for the front wall of his own bachelor compound.

Then they dropped to the rosy-tinted hundred babies, playing riotously on the side walls.

"How did *that* decoration get in here!" he thought in surprise. "Little Eight—Sheeow Ba! *Ne na-er?*" he called.

His hands dropped to the side of the pad on which he was lying. They felt the hard, cool woven-straw surface of a Chinese bed.

"Would you like me to send for Sheeow Ba?" asked a flute-like voice at his elbow.

Weston turned. A dull pain throbbed at the base of his brain. Through the open window he saw the slanting roof of the Temple of Tang, dull and spotted under a cloudy sky.

Beside him stood Moonlady in simple black, unpainted.

"Are you *hau,* Way Ba-lee?" she asked.

He gazed at her in wonder.

"How did I come here?"

"I brought you here for care, Precious One. Unintentionally, I caused your injury. Should I not see to your healing?"

"But what of those who were with me—Miss Langdon—the Adviser—?"

Her eyes grew troubled. "They are safe, Elderborn—if you must think of them. The

foreign miss is in her home—the Wolf is here with us. He shall not leave, Way Ba-lee, until he solves the mystery of the treaty document. You have endured suspicion because of it long enough! That shall be lifted from you."

Light flashed in her dark eyes.

"Friend of my Country, the Patriots triumph! The populace have joined us, the traitorous officials are besieged. Pledges of support pour in from Shanghai, from Hankow, from Canton, from Nanking, from Mukden. Throughout the eighteen inner and four extra provinces, from the Yellow waters to the Western Table—from the Land of the Russians to the mountains of Buddha-land—our student comrades have organized to arouse the Hundred Surnames. The guilds are closing their shops to compel the punishment of the traitors. They are boycotting the foreign aggressor to teach him his mistake. The Shansee General is descending upon the capital." She picked up his hand. "Way Ba-lee, the Patriots triumph. You triumph with us!"

Then she added softly: "Now do you understand why you are here?"

He had brightened while she recited this pæan of victory. But now he withdrew his hand from hers and looked beyond her—out towards the Temple of Tang.

"I will send for your Little Eight," she said tenderly. "He will know what you need. Let down your heart! You will be *hau* here."

Her eyes swept the room, rested a moment upon the *tsin* on its carved stand, then wavered and dropped. She went out softly.

XV

CHOICE

"WILL it pain you to walk, or will you be carried?"

Jailer Woo stood outside the sliding panel of the secret room in the Temple of Tang, and peered into the semi-darkness at a white-coated figure hunched on a cot.

"So I am to leave here?" responded the prisoner acridly. "I prefer to walk if it's a reasonable distance."

"Only to the next compound, but the road is difficult. Come, then!"

Woo held back the panel while the tall Englishman stepped out. A smothered grunt of pain escaped him as he stooped for the low exit.

Langdon found himself before a gaudily-painted image of Tang the Brilliant, always recognizable by the head-dress shaped after the

full moon, and the pear-branch sceptor. The Ancient Arbiter stood on a giant wooden tortoise, emblem of immortal life. In front of him, smoke curled lazily from a bronze tripod. A few students stood stiffly about the little shrine, their hands on wooden holsters slung on belts which bore plainly in red characters: "Metropolitan Police."

"Humph!" snorted Langdon.

"Descend here," ordered Woo, and with a wrench at the handle-like tail he detached the rear half of the tortoise, disclosing a deep well equipped with a flight of precipitous stairs.

"A dungeon?" asked the Adviser.

"No, merely a passage. Hold the side-rail here with your good arm. The steps are slippery."

At the bottom Langdon discovered a tunnel sloping gradually toward the light. From one side, near its mouth, protruded the rough rock foundation of an ancient wall. He proceeded cautiously on the treacherous footing, followed closely by Woo, and soon they emerged in one of the tiny blind alleys left so frequently between boundary walls in Peking. Here and there empty milk-tins, cold-cream jars of

American and Japanese origin, and rotting woven-straw bags had been kicked aside to give footing. Prisoner and guard came to a cryptomeria tree which crowded against the wall of the building comprising the left side of the passage. Woo stepped ahead and threw open a tiny door hidden by the massive trunk.

"Push through here," he ordered.

Langdon emerged from behind a goat's-hair tapestry into one end of a long guest-hall carpeted in blue. At the other end, a group of young men and women in students' uniforms lolled over stiff blackwood chairs, looking on. In the center, against the rear wall, the five-barred flag hung formally. In front of the Republican emblem were several tables covered with a jumble of papers and tea-cups and at one stood an aristocratic-featured young woman, garbed in black jacket and trousers. Her pale face was set off by the vivid green plumage of a giant cockateel which perched on a stand directly behind her.

Her delicate face assumed a strange expression of hatred as she turned and caught sight of the approaching Adviser.

"Introduce your guest, Mr. Woo," she commanded in a low, incisive voice which betrayed her emotion.

The impromptu jailer led his charge to her table. "Your Excellency Lang," he said, bowing low, "I present the Chairman of the martyred Inner Committee of the Association of Sworn Patriots. And, sitting under her chairmanship at the present moment, the Joint Emergency Committee of the Patriots and Students' Organizations."

Adviser Langdon could scarcely have been called presentable. A two-days' growth of whiskers adorned his cheeks and chin. His left arm and shoulder were in bandages, over which hung loosely one sleeve of his "monkey jacket," spotted and streaked with mud and dust. In one leg of his trousers was a long rent, through which his bare knee protruded when he walked or sat down.

"What foolishness is this?" he asked contemptuously.

"Your Greatness Lang, we have long looked forward to the privilege of close acquaintance and intimate conference with you. We trust

the result may be mutually profitable," replied the girl coolly. "Now bring in the other guest, Woo."

Her bailiff crossed the court and returned shortly leading Weston. The American's expression became anxious when he saw Langdon.

"So you are a prisoner, too!" said the Englishman, looking at him quizzically. "You will learn in time how much your good friends love you!"

"Colonel, I beg you to believe that I am not responsible for this."

But Langdon turned his back.

Starflower tripped in from the court, her bright carmine jacket and carefree air in happy contrast to the strained atmosphere of the room. "Madam Muskhair is going out," she told Moonlady. "She has had a message from an old acquaintance and she bids you feel no alarm at her absence."

"Trouble not your heart—*hau!*"

Moonlady turned back to the business in hand. "Will the guests arrange themselves!" she commanded. "Way Ba-lee, who is still

pale, in that chair," she blushed slightly as she gestured to Weston. "The Colonel will pardon our rude neglect! We are short of seats."

"Foreign sirs, we have asked you here to beg your assistance in clearing up a mysterious matter. A year ago some young men and women, 'Patriots' well worthy of the name, risked their lives to seize a traitorous document from the Foreign Office. I was one of that group—the treaty was placed by the cowardly minister directly in my hands. I read it, and remember its provisions fairly well."

The members of the Joint Emergency Committee leaned forward in rapt attention.

"That document was delivered to the Foreign Brother Way Ba-lee, whom we believed to be our friend, with the request that he use it to prove to the Presidential Adviser the justness and correctness of our apprehensions and the propriety of our action. We believed that the *Da Dzoong Toong* would react according to the advice of his Foreign Adviser. Way

See'en-sung, will you now state if you received the document from our messenger?"

Langdon had maintained a stolid countenance. Weston, however, was visibly taken by surprise.

"Yes, I received it," he answered.

"Tell what you did with it," ordered Moonlady severely. But she averted her eyes, as though she were afraid the sight of him would weaken her air of judicial dignity.

"I showed it to the Adviser."

"Where?"

"In his study."

"Did your eyes leave it?"

"He asked to take notes, Little Chairman. I was summoned out of the study while he worked, but he brought it to me soon in the garden."

"Who summoned you, Foreign Brother?"

"Miss Langdon. I went out to speak a word with her . . ."

Something in Moonlady's eyes stopped him. He looked away silently cursing himself for having mentioned Helen.

There was a moment of silence. Then the Little Chairman continued, her voice steady

and more portentous. "Way Ba-lee, during that bit of time could the Adviser have forged and substituted a false document?"

At this point, Langdon himself interrupted her.

"I'll answer that question." He raised his good arm in a gesture of scorn. "Of course I did! Do you think I would let that compact get out? It is my place to protect my employers from the consequences of follies they have already committed, as well as to keep them from new indiscretions."

Weston stared at him, his worst fears realized. "You returned me a different document? But the parchment, the seals, the pen-style . . ."

"Simple, my little griffin. I am well provided for exigencies!"

A student cut in. "It was, then, *you!*" He thrust his head toward Langdon. "As we thought! You caused the populace to laugh at the Patriots—even while we lay in our own blood! Slick-head! Truly, the Wolf!"

Weston, very pale, rose to his feet and advanced toward Langdon.

"And did you, too, inspire the order to fire on the Patriots?" he asked.

"Patriots!" scoffed Langdon. "I'm sick of that word! Whoever authorized these young whippersnappers to appropriate it?"

He turned to the students, who were crowding about their chairman. "If you are patriots, why don't you make something of your country, instead of leaving it to foreigners to dig out of the filth? Why don't you build railroads, and clean up your streets, and take care of your beggars and insane, and start hospitals for your sick? Why don't you suppress the bandits that ravage your country unmolested? Why don't you prevent the everlasting wars between your fine *tuchuns?* Why don't you stop the extortions of your avaricious officials? Patriots, bah! Rather young puppies spoiled by a little western education, yipping to get your noses in the public dish with the rest!"

The students listened quietly and stiffly, but a terrible hatred showed in their faces.

"Foreign pus-pocket!" commented one, when the Adviser had finished. "Why prolong this? Pinch him out!"

The Little Chairman rapped with her seal for order. "The Wolf is sinking his fangs into his own throat, Brothers. Take your seats and listen!"

She addressed Langdon. "You have preyed upon our country, Elderborn Lang. You stole the document—you are a thief. You deceived the public and your young friend who trusted you—you are a liar. You caused the death of young men and violation of young women—you are a slayer and a ravisher. You took part in betraying the nation which you were pledged to serve—you are a traitor. These crimes—confessed by your own mouth, human Wolf—ask for death. But we, and our other foreign guests, are interested in the motive behind them. Would you tell us just how you turn the blood of the Patriots into bank deposits?"

"I don't know what you mean. My motive is simply public security and order."

The Little Chairman faced the Committee members. "If Adviser Lang does not care to boast about this accomplishment too, I can answer for him. Some clerks of his bank and of the Foreign Office have recently supplied

information which completes the evidence against him."

She turned back to the Englishman.

"Adviser Lang, was it not your possession of the treaty document that brought you a twenty-five thousand dollar transfer from the Minister of Foreign Affairs? And was not that the reason why thirty thousand yen were placed in your bank account by the financial agent of the Japanese Legation?"

"All right, you know it all!" sneered the Adviser. "I beat you to the spoils—that's the trouble! What about it? Do you want a share?"

Moonlady turned to Weston, who was gazing at Langdon with abhorrence. "What think you now of the man whose daughter you love?" she asked him in a whisper. "And of her—the lure in his snare for you!"

"Fitting progeny of barbarian pirates!" She addressed Langdon again. "We want none of your stinking money. But, on your life, we require the document for which we shed our blood. Are you ready to give us, in your own hand, an order for its delivery?"

"If I refuse?"

Moonlady made an expressive gesture.

"Well, you may have it if you will release me. I'm through with China anyway. I fancy it's about time for me to clean up and take my medals home."

"Have you one of your official cards with you, Adviser?" She handed him a fountain pen. "Write the instructions on the back of it. Be explicit."

Langdon stepped forward, put his card on the corner of her table and held it with the elbow of his bandaged arm. "Take this to my residence," he said as he wrote, "and call for my amanuensis. Show it to no one else. Be certain!"

"Lin, take what he is writing," Moonlady directed. "Bring the document. Be wary of deceit."

Lin stepped up, but Langdon paused. "Is it understood that you will let me out of here at once?"

With a sudden movement, Lin snatched the card and stuck it in his girdle.

"Not so hasty, Brother!" admonished the Little Chairman, extending her hand.

Just then a carmine figure dashed in carry-

ing a large "Military" name-card. This card, instead of the Adviser's was thrust into Moonlady's hand. Lin, seizing his opportunity, dodged out the door.

"Muskhair is back," Starflower announced breathlessly, "and General Gwan of Shansee is with her! Muskhair says come horseback quick!"

Moonlady's arm dropped. "Brothers of the Committee, will you remain here? Woo, look well to your wards."

Dropping the great seal into the pigment pot she ran from the room—to encounter Muskhair, grave of face, by the little pool in the court.

"You will have to handle him carefully, child," Muskhair warned. "His heart fires over you until he has forgotten all else. He sent me a private message to meet him at the Heart-Enlarge Pavilion, and asked me to be go-between in his suit. I told him that I thought it would be impossible—that you were not interested in such offers now. He demanded to know if that young foreigner Way Ba-lee had been in communication with you of late, and I told him Master Way was

here. I was indiscreet, Little Sister. He flew into a rage and paced up and down the portico, clanking his scabbard. Finally he became calmer, and called for wine, and said he would see you immediately. He is in your boudoir!"

Moonlady listened nervously. At best, it was inopportune—this courtship! She threw back her head and entered the boudoir.

"General Gwan!" She greeted him formally, bowing with closed hands in the approved manner of Chinese women. "Is it thus you come—when we had expected you at the head of a conquering host?"

The well-built, close-cropped officer, betrayed no lack of self-possession at her greeting. He merely bowed in return.

"I come thus, save for two body-guards at the gate there. The conquering host is without the wall. I entered alone to ask, in return for this proof of my fidelity to your cause, a not unreasonable reward."

"Oh!" cried Moonlady impatiently, "couldn't you have waited until the crisis is over? We need you so much! This is no time to talk about such things!"

"Yes, you need me . . . you have needed me all along!" A bitter smile played about his lips. "And I have been glad to rally to your cause—for my heart is as patriotic as any. But now I should wait? Wait till this crisis is over, when you no longer need me, to see you give yourself to a pale youth of a foreigner!"

He sat down on the bed and dropped his head in his hands. "I know I am weak, or I would think only of the Cause. I am a soldier . . . yet I am weak! But the great General Wu San-gway was also weak when he invited the Manchus into our country to help him pursue the captors of his beloved."

He raised his head and gazed at her as she stood speechless before him. "Weak men must make strong speeches. I am weak from love. So I say this: Heart's Idol, you shall give me your pledge now or my soldiers march back to the plateaus of Shansee!"

Moonlady clasped her hands as though in supplication. Yet even now, there was something compelling, something almost lovable, about the man's abject devotion, his quiet suffering. After all, he had come far for her.

. . . Her eyes swept past him to the little toilette stand, the cane bed, the *tsin* in its carved blackwood stand. They came to rest upon the rosy-tinted hundred babies.

"General. . . ." She hardly recognized this small voice as her own. "It shall be as you ask. Will you take charge of the trial of the Wolf now? He has confessed."

General Gwan nodded in his soldier-like way, rose, and marched stiffly past her to the door.

With a low wail Moonlady cast herself upon the unkempt bed-clothes in which Barrie had lain. "Oh, my country," she sobbed, "how much I am loving *you!*"

XVI

THE CALL OF RACE

THE two white men, waiting uncomfortably in the committee room, glanced from time to time at one another—Weston anxiously, Langdon with cool nonchalance.

"A pretty tool they've made of you," Langdon finally remarked. "You're detained here to be handy, I suppose, when they need you. They ought to let you go now, since I've taken the blame! I fancy you didn't know what you were getting us into. Your damn susceptibility has finished my career in this part of the world. But if only Helen is unharmed I'll forgive you!"

Forgive him! Weston smiled bitterly at the thought. The man had no smallest qualm of conscience—no redeeming feature save his love for his daughter. What terror she must

be in now for her father's safety! And did she have an anxious thought for him, Weston, as well?

His eyes wandered about the room. Memories returned to him, drifting from every corner. Helen's father might be a scoundrel—but her lover was false!

"Helen?" was his belated and humble reply to the acrid comments of the Adviser. "God pity Helen!"

Langdon gazed at him peculiarly, then looked away.

The occupants of the room were startled by the entrance of a large erect figure in gold braided uniform.

Weston rose in recognition. *"Lie-lee'ow,* Bigness!" he cried familiarly. But the general silenced him with an unfriendly glance, and walked to the presiding table. Two bodyguards with revolvers entered and took positions behind him.

"I am Gwan," he announced shortly. "At the request of your Little Chairman I take charge of this investigation."

"General Gwan of Datoong?" asked Langdon, disconcerted.

"That unworthy subordinate. Am I addressing the President's Adviser? Good! I am told you made some very damaging confessions. What have you to say for yourself?"

"I believe that matter is concluded. In return for a certain favor I am to be set free from this illegal detention."

"Are you not too assured? You have possibly received leniency from women and students, but you are dealing with a soldier now!"

Langdon raised his good hand in angry gesture, while his bandaged elbow swung back and forth nervously. "What, then! Will you go back on the agreement? Truly the students are impertinent enough. When the military join them——"

"You are not talking to house coolies. You would do better to prostrate yourself before these young men you have wronged, you blood-sucking parasite on our nation! Unfortunately the death of a thousand cuts has been abolished. That would be a fitting punishment for you!"

"My dear General, fortunately for me the matter of my punishment is entirely out of your jurisdiction. You know as well as I that

you have no authority to try—or even to detain—an extraterritorial. Such talk might come from these irresponsible and uninformed students, but it is ridiculous from the commander of a provincial army. Now that I have fallen into your hands, you will be responsible for me to my Legation."

Gwan drew himself up. His eyes half closed, and his left hand jerked at his scabbard strap. "We will not talk of responsibility!" he said, controlling himself admirably. "If your Legation is going to be solicitous, we might as well give it something to do! Who is in charge of this man?"

Woo came forward.

"Take him away!"

The General turned to his two guards. "Assist the lad. Give the *doongsee* a cord to play with tonight. If he is not dead by sunrise, shoot him!"

The guards laid hold of Langdon, but for a moment he tore himself free.

"You wouldn't dare do this, General! My government is too powerful. I warn you, you'd rot in a Burmese prison. You have not the courage—*ne boo gan!*"

Weston looked up, sick with anxiety. "General!" he protested: "Surely this is hasty!"

The Shansee General turned on him. "You were not asked for advice," he said coldly, stalking from the room.

Langdon was dragged out the way he had come. The committee members departed in little gesticulating groups. No one seemed to pay any attention to Weston. Then Starflower came gathering up the used tea-things. Now and again she paused to cast a coy glance at the American.

His eyes followed her mechanically, but she was only a bit of color punctuating his gloomy thoughts. Woo had informed him yesterday, politely but firmly, that he would be stopped if he endeavored to leave the compound. Now he understood why Moonlady had detained him. But she must be through with him—so why not attempt to leave?

He rose from his stiff chair and, with uncertain step, walked out by way of the great double-phoenix design in the yielding rug. Why, he asked himself, had General Gwan declined to greet him, and answered so gruffly his protest? Surely he had served faithfully

. . . or had his services been merely a "dangerous and thankless effort"?

He doubled around the plumed figure, absorbed in his thoughts.

Langdon must strangle himself or be shot . . . he would choose the latter, of course, because he was a white man . . . the students had a right to hate him, but this was pretty drastic . . . two white men lost in a sea of Orientals . . . could one see the other shot like a dog, however much he deserved it?

Weston paused, looking cautiously toward the door. "Starflower!" he called softly.

The little maid set down her stack of teabowls and came to him, pouting at him teasingly. "You noticed me, Excellency?"

"Starflower, where does that tapestry lead to?"

"That is a secret passage to the Temple of Tang, Master Ba-lee. It leads through a passage behind the guest-hall and a tunnel that comes up under the image. Until you and Greatness Wolf came, we used it when we didn't want to go away around by the street. You know the temple can't afford a care-taker and we Blossoms sweep it out and keep in-

cense burning. The Pear-garden Guild pays Madam Muskhair four dollars a moon——" But Weston checked her by lifting his hand.

"Starflower, could you smuggle a note to the *Lang?* Here is a dollar for a new headdress." He took her hand and pressed it confidingly.

She nodded her head in coy acquiescence. Hastily he scribbled with a writing brush on a sheet of horizontally-ruled Chinese stationery:

"Langdon: I shall try to rescue you at midnight. Be alert. W."

Starflower took it. "I can pretend to the guards I didn't know they were using the passage. But it may spoil my slippers. There has been much wet lately." She pulled her short trousers unnecessarily far back to show her "lily" feet.

"Well, then, another dollar for shoes! Run now!"

She laughed and then was gone.

Weston turned back, thoughtfully. "Two of us should be able to make a get-away, even if we are crippled," he mused. Then, sud-

denly sensing a presence, he spun around quickly towards the door.

Moonlady was standing before him. She had changed from her black to a green satin jacket. Her glossy hair was crowned with a lambent red coral tiara.

She stood looking at him with melting black eyes. "Way Ba-lee," she asked softly, "do you forgive me? I have thought of you so much!"

The old exotic lure of her drew him almost irresistibly. He struggled to maintain a poise of aloofness. Gently he withdrew her hand, which had strayed caressingly to his lapel.

"Forgive you? From the time I found you my days and nights have been filled with pain. Because of you I have been a fool—I have brought grief and mistrust to the heart of the one I cherish. You have used me as a tool and made my own race despise me!"

He dropped into a chair, a great weariness upon him. "Forgive you? Oh yes, I suppose I forgive you! But I want to get away from you—where I will never see you—hear you—think of you again!"

Moonlady was trembling. Little red flames danced in the tiara.

"And have I lost no nights of sleep over you, Way Ba-lee? Have I known any peace since you took me from the hands of the ravishers? Have I not plotted and planned for you, defending you against suspicions, persuaded those who doubted to employ you, schemed that you should have honor and position from our victory? I have nursed and protected, not imprisoned you. . . . Though you know it not, your fine people have outlawed you. Your government has withdrawn protection from you and you could be killed with impunity by any enemy who hates you!"

He looked up, startled.

"I have thought of you almost above my sacred Cause, Way Ba-lee—and with a little encouragement I should have put you above that. For a drop of your affection I would have been a slave in your household. I have given you my devotion—my love—my body! For you I have almost forgotten my country!"

For a moment she stood rigid, fighting back her tears. When she spoke again, her voice was softer.

"Way Ba-lee, we have finished! You ask never to see, hear, think of me! The first two

I can grant. The last lies with your heart. Go back to your own people—not here where they hate you now, where the daughter of a robber has tricked you, but to your own country—America, the Beautiful Land. Go back. . . ."

"Do you dismiss his insults so easily?" interrupted a gruff voice behind them. Weston rose and turned to see General Gwan standing in the doorway. "Not so, I! But come, lady—the army waits to acclaim you. We will deal further with him tomorrow."

Moonlady studied the General a moment, then walked slowly past him from the room. He and Weston glared at one another a moment—a strange anger in each heart—before the General turned on his heel and followed the Little Chairman.

The American smiled grimly. Outlawed by the foreign community . . . so it was as bad as that.

Slowly he crossed the pavement to his chamber. As he threw himself on the bed, Woo appeared as if by magic.

"I am directed to give you quarters elsewhere tonight, Elderborn," he announced im-

passively. "Now that the Wolf has been put under ground, where he is likely to stay, you might as well have his room. Shall I call your servant from the gatehouse to pack your things? I will usher you."

"Langdon underground—you mean dead?"

"Not yet. But the well under old Tang is likely to be his grave."

They went out on the narrow *hutung*—followed by Little Eight with the *rootau* saddled over his shoulder. For the first time Weston learned the connection between the compound of Muskhair and the little Temple of Tang. They fronted on right-angled alleys, their backs cornered in the center of the block. Separating them was a large corner lot covered with the tall, dark buildings of a rug factory. A small courtyard introduced the shrine.

"Is the well under here?" asked Weston, indicating the large plaster figure of Tang.

"Yes. A good den for the Wolf, truly! But your room is *here!*" Woo stepped to the side wall and slid back a panel. "A bit dark but quite dry. There are some new straw mats on the flagging and a cot that we placed

for Adviser Lang. Send your boy back to the gatehouse before nightfall. If you wish tea or water clap your hands—I will be on guard in the shrine."

Little Eight moodily watched Woo take his leave. "Ancient Master," he asked, "why do they keep you here? You are well enough to go home now."

"That's a long story, Sheeow Ba. But I thank you for staying with me. Make up my cot and then do as they wish."

"Master Ba-lee, while you were ill I brought a long envelope from the American Legation for you. She they call the Little Chairman took it away from me."

"*Shih-ma!* Well, I know what it contained. That is all till tomorrow, Little Eight."

Weston pulled off his shoes, dropped on the cot, and drowsed off into a troubled sleep.

The gong of the midnight patrol tolling over the cloistered compounds to the shrill words: "Thieves beware! Villains flee! I am coming!" woke him. He was surprised to see the dull glow of Tang's incense punk. The panel had not been closed.

A figure came creeping in, and Weston, reaching for some weapon of defense, caught hold of a shoe.

"Way See'en-sung!" It was the whispering voice of Woo. "The Little Chairman has returned! She suggests that if you escape tonight General Gwan will be relieved of the distraction of quarreling with you in the morning. I'm going out for tea-water. The other boys don't wake easily. But avoid old Tang. . . . Are you listening?"

Was he listening! Weston was surprised at how refreshed he felt—better than at any time since his injury. He became almost flippant.

"The Little Chairman's invitation is accepted without the formality of a repetition. Your Greatness," he replied.

He whistled softly as he laced up his shoes in the darkness. So this adventure was ended! Little Eight would be surprised in the morning to discover him gone.

He hoped Moonlady would be happy with the Shansee General. . . . Gwan was every bit a man. . . . Moonlady was a great woman in every sense of the word. . . . And then

the ghost of a regret touched his heart softly, leaving an ethereal fragrance behind it. Breasts like two lotus flowers on a moonlit pool . . . lips like a dew sprinkled rose-bud . . . a voice like the low tones of a flute . . . a face luminous with mind and emotion. . . .

Yes, this adventure was ended—but there would be things to dream about; there would be little fervent prayers for the other's happiness, there would be warm wishes in secret moments.

Weston felt his way rather carelessly to the shrine room. The incense glowed and a wisp of smoke went curling upward under the idol's nose. A bayonet protruded from behind the wooden skirt.

A warning leaped to his mind. "Avoid Old Tang!" Of course! . . . this way led to the well, to Langdon, to the General's bodyguards. His carelessness dropped from him.

Before him was the door to the courtyard, barred only by a sleeping lad who had slumped down to a cramped sitting posture. Now, if ever, was the time to keep his word—to save the father of Helen, all question of right or wrong aside——

He peered around the image. On the wooden turtle which comprised the pedestal sat a soldier, snoring peacefully. And suddenly, the rear half of the turtle moved! Weston watched it, hypnotized. It moved again, a half inch this time—and a thin piece of board protruded. Swiftly the board pried away the rump of the turtle, leaving an opening immediately at the legs of the sleeping man. Then a hand reached out with a silken rope, and cautiously slipped the loop about the soldier's feet.

Weston dropped to hands and knees. "Colonel!" he whispered through the aperture. "I'm here—Weston!"

"Good for you, Weston!" was the muffled reply. "Can you grab that fellow around the neck so he can't scream, while I jerk him down into this hole? Then he will be all right. Leap quickly—don't miss his throat! When I see his legs fly out I'll pull!"

Weston tested the agility of his fingers and suddenly clamped them around the man's windpipe. There was a gurgle, a convulsive struggle, and the guard clutched the American's wrists in a grip of steel. Then both were

pulled down into the damp, inky blackness, the soldier's bulk beneath.

"Don't let go!" whispered Langdon hoarsely. "Keep your grip until I get this cord off his feet!"

"But we just want to gag him—not strangle him!"

"Either way. We can stuff these bandages in his mouth. I had to choke the other dog . . . it was the only way."

"Do you mean you killed him!"

"Yes, with their bloody cord. I got him to come down and ease my bandage while this fellow was gone for tea-water. I already had one end of the cord tied to the stairway, and when he was fooling with the splints I wound it around his neck and caught him prettily. In the struggle, I guess I squeezed a bit too tight! Then this fool came back and sat down on top and went to sleep."

"You swine!" He glared down at the panting guard. "Keep that arm out of my broken side! . . . Now search him, Weston . . . Hello! He's got two pistols on him, eh? Well, that's luck!"

Weston rose from his task and looked at

the Adviser with abhorrence, disgusted with the older man's cold-bloodedness. But there was nothing to do now but to go on. He would see Langdon free and then get away from him as quickly and as far as possible.

They took the two pistols—as well as a knife which Langdon clasped in his good hand. "Now if you can only tie this shoulder up a bit?" he whispered. "I had to tear the bandages off to work with."

They climbed the ladder-like stairway leaving the guard bound and gagged but breathing freely.

"There's nothing to block us this way, is there?" asked Langdon.

"Only the student guards—and they are fast asleep," answered Weston, with averted gaze.

"Much better than attempting to scale the high walls beyond the tunnel. Afraid I couldn't make 'em! Don't know how much longer I can support this pain."

A pale crescent moon faintly illumined the court. No person was in sight. They stepped over the boy at the door, and rounded the

spirit screen. A half-dozen more steps and they would be in the street.

Suddenly a voice spoke sharply in astonishment. It was Woo's as he advanced from the shadow of the screen. Weston saw Langdon look about in despair, then leap with the knife and plunge it through the lad's throat. Not with a deadly enough aim, however, to prevent a dying scream.

With a quick glance about him, Langdon whipped out the blade and Woo sank slowly to the ground, his blood making blotches on the pale plaster screen. The sight sickened Weston.

There was a clattering in the gatehouse, a shouting of *"Shenmo! Jwa ta!"*—and several lads stumbled out, bootless, with robes unbuttoned.

"The wall—the low wall there! Leap to the top and pull me up!" commanded Langdon. Weston obeyed mechanically. It seemed impossible at first, but somehow he made it. With his aid Langdon rolled up on the top just as somebody below clutched at his legs.

"What are we into? God—my shoulder!"

Langdon gritted his teeth, and felt frantically his pockets. "I've dropped my gun! Shoot them, Weston! Shoot them, you ass . . . don't you see them scaling up here after us?"

"No, I won't shoot. But I'll help you run for it . . ."

"Damn it! . . . Then give me the gun!"

"No! I'll help you run—this way! Duck through there. . . ."

They were zigzagging through the narrow aisles between the high loom-sheds of the carpet factory. Bales of wool impeded their progress.

"Oh God," repeated the Adviser, clambering over, "My side and shoulder! . . . They're like fire!"

The courtyards of the Temple and Muskhair's compound on either side of them were full of shouts now. The foremost pursuers were only a few feet behind. Only the turn of a sudden corner saved them from capture several times.

Then, in a shadowed passage, they fell headlong into a dye-vat. Weston pulled the Adviser out, and together they struggled on slowly, painfully.

"Let's hide in here!" exclaimed the American, dragging Langdon into one of the sheds. "Can you climb? I'll boost you—grab that bar and put your feet on my shoulder!"

In a moment they were astraddle the top beam of the weaving frame, close under the sooty roof. Almost immediately, the searchers entered with yellow torches.

"There they are—the rats!" shouted one pointing. "Come down here where we can get you or we'll knock the loom from under you!"

"You'll not get me alive, you Yellow Pigs!"

Langdon's voice was husky, and his eyes gleamed weirdly in the torch-light. The knife in his good hand rose and flashed—and a second later his heavy body thudded on the hard dirt floor.

XVII

THE DOCUMENT

THE British Minister, twirler extraordinary of the dark mustache, called formally at Helen's compound.

"Little Missie *boo dzai!*" announced Lau Dah politely, obeying all rigid instructions to admit no callers whatever. But the Minister was insistent.

"Either she is in, or she has disobeyed my instructions," he said with an air of authority.

"Well, I will ask her," compromised Lau Dah, weakening.

When Helen appeared, the Minister was all business.

"Miss Langdon," he told her, "the Diplomatic Corps has decided to notify the Chinese government that if your father is not returned within three days there will be foreign intervention to restore order. Of course the Japanese have been for it all the time. They have

specific interests in preserving this administration, I am sure. I don't like the smell of it—that's why I held out till now. But we must rescue the Adviser. And meanwhile, don't worry! I think we shall have him back safe and sound."

Helen smiled at him gratefully, hardly trusting herself to speak.

"If there is anything the students do not want it is foreign intervention, which would perpetuate this government," he went on. "In that case, patriots or office-seekers, whichever they might be, will all see their tremendous effort go for nothing. Of course, if they put up resistance, everything will be thrown into the hands of the Japanese. No one else in this part of the world possesses force sufficient to cow them. And their new champion, this Shansee General——"

Helen uttered an exclamation.

"The Shansee General? I have heard Mr. Weston talk of him! Is he here?"

"Yes. He arrived unexpectedly at the West Gate Station with a force at noon. No one has been able to get in touch with him to verify his intentions, but our informers tell

me that he is under the influence of that remarkable 'Little Chairman.' She must be a very gifted young woman—sort of a reincarnation of the old Empress Dowager!"

"Yes, she is quite remarkable," agreed Helen wrily.

The Minister rose. "Well, Miss Langdon, keep up your courage! We shall get results now! If his captors allow intervention to come peaceably, which I doubt, we will then be able to search every compound in the city."

"Excellency, you don't think anything could have happened to him before this?" Helen's voice trembled.

"Oh, no—never fear! That would be casting aspersion on Chinese business sense. A dead man is poor material for bargaining. Good afternoon, Miss Langdon!"

Lau Dah was bowing him out when a rickshaw man drew up, his thin blue garments damp with perspiration. A hatless student leaped from the vehicle waving a card.

"Is this Adviser Lang's gate?"

"It is. What could you wish here, Younger Brother? What, the Adviser's card! His handwriting too! Have you come from him?"

"I have. The card is to the amanuensis. Take me to him at once, I beg you."

"Follow me to his cell. But tell me, where is the Wolf? I speak not out of place. See!" And he bared his arm.

"The *Joong!* You, a Patriot?"

"Yes, I was put here to watch last year—before the massacre—by the Little Chairman herself. I have been forgotten a drop . . ."

Lin bowed formally, showing his own arm. "A raft in a freshet, Great Brother. Then help me. Somewhere in this compound is the true treaty-document that we took from the Foreign Office. The Lang has confessed that he stole it and substituted another. He is being held at the Temple of Tang. The Little Chairman has offered him his life for the document. She is too long-hearted! He is a murderer—a blackmailer of thieves—justice cannot let him live!"

As they walked up the path, the gateman caustically addressing himself aloud. "Old Bent-Back had the document all this time! Lau Dah, where are your bowels? You deserve neglect!" Whereupon he slapped his stomach reproachfully.

"Yes, I will help you," he told Lin. "But I desire that the Little Missie, his daughter, be spared as much as possible! And what of Way Be-lee?"

"*Hau.* Langdon's confession freed him from all suspicion, of course. The Little Chairman is caring for him."

"And she, too, is at the Temple of Tang?"

"In her compound adjacent. But does the scribe dwell here?"

Lau Dah led Lin across the Treasury, then through the littered study to the tiny door in its rear wall. Going through they entered a damp, brick-flagged cubicle, with a narrow *kang* across one end, and a cheap table before the one small paper-paned window.

A sallow, stooped individual started up from a book which was almost touching the end of his nose.

"Since when do gatemen enter without calling?" he demanded.

"I bring a man with a most important message from the Adviser."

"From the Adviser—for *me!*"

"You decipher English. Read this." Lin placed the card under his nose.

The amanuensis spelled out the words slowly:

"On this order take from the secret safe and deliver at once to bearer the document you worked upon for me the night of the student trouble one year ago. It is the price of my liberty. Tell my daughter nothing of this, but assure her that I will be home presently.

"P. S. Tell Miss Langdon to prepare for a long trip."

The little man read it through several times, looking up to ponder between sentences, in spite of Lin's growing impatience and Lau Dah's suspicious stare. He blinked his eyes owlishly.

"There is no such document," he said in a squeaky voice of finality. "Either this note must be forged or the Adviser's bowels are losing continuity under the treatment he is receiving."

"Old slippery-head!" cried the gateman threateningly, "if the Adviser is lost because this note is not heeded, you will fall heir to

the real document! And you think you can use it to blackmail big checks from the thieves of our country even as he did! Well, I saw that document! I can quote you its opening words. I know it is here. Come, if you will not disclose it for the sake of loyalty to your master, you shall do so from fear!"

Lau Dah hit the table with the palm of his hand. "I have mastered refined methods of compulsion. Shall I make those eyes of yours bulge a drop more?"

The little man arose, leaning on the table. "Oh, well, if you threaten me. Yielding before the violent, as before the insane, says the Sage, is not a discredit! Since you seem an accomplice in this, I will bring the document —upon my faith—to your gatehouse within a half point of the clock." He lifted his cold cup of tea to signify that his interviewers were dismissed.

Lau Dah did not budge. "The Sage also says, far too conveniently for *hwa-toe* like you, that where there is a violence one need not keep faith. We want the original document this time—not another of your clever forgeries. We want it straightway!"

Lau Dah approached threateningly, and the withered scholar, recognizing discretion as the better part of valor, led the way into the study. Pulling out the lowest drawer of the Adviser's desk, he lifted a false bottom, disclosing a large native porous-paper envelope, ruled in red and labeled: "Embodyment of confidential conversations of July-October." He extracted a document.

"Take it!" he said with an ugly look. Then, like a shadow, he slipped back into his own cell and bolted the door.

"Let me see!" protested Lau Dah to Lin, who had snatched it. "Yes, that's the treaty!"

He glanced at the characters on the parchment. "What infamy! Filthy traitors! Alien devils! They would make us slaves! Here my boy, take it to the Little Chairman! See that it is not lost again!"

As they returned through the "Treasury," Helen came in.

"Whom have you here, Ancient Big?" she asked. But Lin hurried past her through the door, hugging the document to his breast.

"He brought a message to the scribe—from the Adviser, I believe, Little Missie."

"From father! Oh, Lau Dah! What was it—quick!"

Lau Dah led her back to the little man's door. "Tell the Little Missie the Adviser's message!" he shouted, pounding on it.

"Tell her yourself!" replied a high peevish voice. But a moment later the Adviser's card was pushed under the door.

Lau Dah tried to cover it with his big cloth-booted foot but Helen bent and snatched it up. The joy and excitement with which she began to read turned quickly to bewilderment.

"It must have some hidden meaning!" she exclaimed. "But why does he wish me not to know? Anyhow he will be free! Did the 'price of his liberty' go, Lau Dah?"

"It went," replied the gateman, gazing at the floor.

"Prepare for a long trip . . ." she read again.

"Oh," she breathed, "we will go away from here! How good of father to think of that! I want to go away—where there are no political intrigues—and no more horseback rides! But how can I give Red Arrow up? . . . And

Lau Dah . . . you have been so good . . . and Ancient Breasts! . . ."

Clasping the card to her breast she hurried to her pavilion. Her eyes were brimming with tears.

"Father will be here soon!" the thought was like a refrain in her heart. But it trailed off inexplicably into sadness at the thought of Weston.

"Can't I stop thinking of him?" she asked herself angrily. "He would have betrayed us for his Chinese girl! . . . Yet I think of him!" And she began to find even greater comfort in the thought of going away.

She strolled through the garden, keeping her eye upon the gate. Autumn was beginning to paint the little park with its glory. The leaves of the Japanese maples were a riot of yellow and scarlet. The clustered coxcomb, which the Chinese graft on a hardy dogweed stem so that it flowers in great masses that overwhelm the eye, lined the walks with a deep red. The bullet-like beech-nuts hung ready to fall at the first touch of frost. Goldfish in their tiny cool ponds resumed their bril-

liancy of coloring and darted with new life between the pagoda-tipped crags of their miniature submarine landscape. Even the atmosphere held that exotic fragrance known only to a north China fall.

Her father would probably not come until morning, Helen decided finally, as the afternoon drew to a close. The sun sank over the Western Hills, leaving a glorious after-glow which darkened imperceptibly—first into deep crimson, then into the purple of evening.

Helen awoke early next morning, angry with herself for having slept so long.

"Has father come—has his Greatness Lang arrived?" she cried to Ancient Breasts. "No, I know well he has not! He would have come to my room even though I were asleep. . . . But tell the servants to have the house ten parts in order. He will surely be here today!"

She put on the gown he liked best, and was adding the last touch to a long and careful toilette, when the American Military Attaché dropped in.

"Any word from your father yet this morning, Miss Langdon?" he asked solicitously as

she stood in the door of her pavilion. "I am sorry to be so early—but you see, I am still anxious."

"None, Captain. You got my message then, that I was expecting him?"

"Yes—it cheered me up wonderfully. You yourself look more rested."

Anxious nights and days had somehow heightened Helen's beauty. The piquancy of her face had changed to a dignity of line and expression which showed the spirit beneath. She was truly beautiful.

The Attaché took her hand. "Miss Langdon, I have made a nuisance of myself with these repeated assurances of my sympathy. But I could not stay away. Do you forgive me?"

"Captain, I cannot tell you how I have appreciated it!" she said pressing his hand. "Come again—soon, please. I may have more definite news for you."

"Thank you, Miss Langdon. But, by the way, I suppose you have heard what has happened in the city! The Patriots are triumphant—they have deposed the President—and it is even rumored that foreign official favor

has veered to their side and Sir Chesney is releasing money to them. And the Japanese minister has resigned—we got that over the radio from Tokyo."

"The President deposed!"

"Yes. Poor old *Dzoong-toong!* Apparently his chief virtue, like that of linoleum, was his supineness. I hope it will make no great difference in your father's plans."

"Oh no, we are going away! But I'm really glad for the students——"

Just then they heard Lau Dah making a clatter at the gate, due to the arrival of someone of importance.

"It's father!" cried Helen, starting forward. But the gate opened to admit the British Minister, looking very solemn as he came towards them.

"Good morning, Miss Langdon," he said, portentously. "Good morning, Captain!" He turned back to Helen. "Miss Langdon, did your father send for a document yesterday—something which he hoped to exchange for his freedom? You will pardon my curiosity, but it is essential that I find out."

"Yes, he sent to his amanuensis for some-

thing he said was the 'price of liberty'—I don't quite understand what it was. I still have his message. He should be here now, don't you think?"

"Let me see his message. I assure you, it's of the greatest importance."

Helen went directly into her boudoir to get the card. The Minister sat down under the straw-mat awning and glanced quizzically at the Attaché. In a moment, Helen returned.

"Here it is!"

He read it, looked up, and twisted his moustache blandly.

"I wonder, Miss Langdon, if you would be so kind as to allow me a word alone with the Captain, here. Please blame it on the emergency of the occasion. . . ."

"Of course, Your Excellency! I quite understand . . ." But Helen could not help being a little puzzled.

When she had gone in, the Minister turned to the American Attaché, silently handing him the card.

"I confess I am absolutely floored!" he said slowly. "I wish you would expain this situation to your Minister. I trusted Langdon

implicitly, but he has come very near to finishing us out here! I have discovered his duplicity just in time to save our British policy. China, where British interests are paramount, has come very near being sold to a rival power—with the British Legation simply looking on! Do you see the purport of all this?"

"I must admit, I am still a bit at sea," answered the Attaché, studying the card. "At least, where Langdon is concerned."

"Well, I'll try to explain it briefly," said the British Minister. "Last night the Shansee General took things into his own hands—as you have probably heard. His men surrounded the palace and gave the President six hours to leave. The Japanese Minister brought the news to me, urging immediate intervention. He said: 'There will be no stopping things once we let this become a *fait accompli.* These Patriots will go to any length—they will repudiate our treaty rights, refuse to pay the indemnities, take control of the customs from Sir Chesney and boldly demand the recall of the Ministers they do not like.' Naturally, I agreed, but suggested that we must

first see General Gwan in person and try a warning.

"We found him in the Shandoong Guild House. Strangely silent, omitting even the formality of a greeting, he handed me a document which I called my Chinese secretary to translate.

The British Minister leaned forward and tapped the American Attaché significantly on the shoulder—then went on:

"Captain, it was the most nefarious pact I have ever heard—worse than any of the rumors that have gone around Peking for a year! 'Where did you get this?' I asked the General. 'The President's Adviser gave it up,' he replied, 'to save his life. He stole it from the students after they took it from the Foreign Office last year. And His Excellency there' —referring to the Japanese Minister—'is among those who have paid him blackmail to keep it under cover. . . .'

"The Japanese Minister merely sneered, and asked me if I could believe such a thing about the Japanese government. I told him I could believe it of almost any government—

whereupon he took up his hat and stick and stalked off, looking as haughty and 'well-I'll-be-damned' as you please.

"Of course, Captain, I had to tell the General that if the document were genuine, we were with him. He promised that no rash steps would be taken against foreign rights. And right now, Langdon's amanuensis should give us conclusive proof!"

Suddenly he called to Lau Dah, who stood at a respectful distance: "Gateman, please fetch adviser Lang's scribe!"

Lau Dah obeyed his instructions quickly and literally. In a few moments he returned, almost carrying "old Bent-back," whose octagonal glasses clung by one bow, and whose round scholar's cap hung ridiculously over one ear.

The Minister twisted his moustache judicially. "Are you Adviser Lang's scribe?"

"I—I have been, Your Greatness."

"I am the British Minister. I want straight answers. Did the Adviser have you counterfeit, with changed terms, a Foreign Office paper about a year ago?"

"Your Excellency, he did. But I did not know it was wrong. I only——"

"And did you hand over that document to a student upon receipt of Adviser Lang's instructions yesterday?"

"Your Excellency, I always obey the instructions of His Greatness Lang. . . ."

The British Minister's eyes flashed dangerously. Then he faced about, with the frowning purpose of a man who has a disagreeable duty to perform.

"Miss Langdon!" he called.

Helen appeared in the doorway and walked towards him slowly, questioning him with her eyes. She seemed to read something in his expression which frightened her.

"Miss Langdon, I have seen General Gwan, and—so far as I know—your father is safe. I assume he is being detained in the little Temple of Tang, in the South City. But I must tell you that I cannot conscientiously offer him my whole-hearted services. He has been bribed by the Japanese to keep under cover, until the opportune moment, a treaty which would sell China into their hands. I have definite proof." He paused and regarded

her an instant—a deep unspoken sympathy in his fine eyes. "Believe me, I only say this to you because, sooner or later, you would find it out—more disagreeably, perhaps. It is one of the hardest moments I have ever had to face. But I feel it my duty to explain to you why I cannot take drastic action in regard to your father's abduction—and I have spoken frankly and honestly for your own sake as well. I am very fond of you."

Helen was about to speak, but something in the Minister's bearing—in his voice and expression—gave his words the ring of unquestionable truth. For a moment she gazed at him with wide eyes. Then the piteous mask of her face altered, and with a sob, she fled to her room.

XVIII

PORTALS

IT was afternoon when Helen, very pale but controlled, summoned the solicitous Lau Dah.

"Do you know the Temple of Tang, Ancient Big?"

"Yes, Little Missie."

"Go there, Ancient Big, and ask why Lang Da-ren is still detained."

"And should I not ask about Master Way, too?"

"Do as you wish—but don't say I sent you."

She sat down with her collection of Japanese color prints to distract her eyes from the clock.

It was two hours before Lau Dah returned. With slow gait, long face and downcast eyes he came slowly to her pavilion. She met him on the veranda.

"Little Missie." His reply to her questioning look was in a whisper, "Master Lang *boo dzai.*"

"Lau Dah—you mean—dead? . . ."

"He perished last night, trying to escape."

She gazed at the old servant steadily. Two great tears trembled on her lashes. "Lau Dah, I—it is *hau,*" she said quietly.

He bowed. "It is *hau,* Little Missie."

She turned blindly toward the door.

"Little Missie—"

She paused, leaning against the lattice.

"Way Ba-lee is in a dungeon under sentence of death."

She did not seem to hear. Her whole body was trembling now. Lau Dah was afraid of her eyes.

"I could not learn why, Little Missie, except that he was condemned by General Gwan," he chattered. "Perhaps it is the whim of the Little Chairman. She is indulging strangely, her old gatewoman told me, and the General is attending her every wish. He bought the President's gas-car for her this morning. She has publicly taken a decorative name—'Moonlady.' And she is send-

ing out invitations for wine parties in her temple. The triumph has made her dizzy—"

But he was talking to the empty doorway. . . .

Determinedly Helen put from her the barren prospect of her future until the decent burial of her father should be accomplished. Lau Dah fetched the body. A huge lacquered coffin was brought from the coffin-shop just outside her gate. A few members of the foreign community paid stiff calls of condolence, but most merely sent cards turned up in the corner and marked "p.p.c—Please pardon (failure to) call"—as it has come to be interpreted in the Orient. For this Helen was grateful. The British Minister sent to offer a small guard of honor, the tiny chapel in his Legation and the services of his chaplain. The deposed *Dzoong-toong* remembered his foreign aide by a virtue-extolling banner written in his own hand, and a pure white cock to be carried astride the coffin.

As the sun set in their faces, the members of the little cortege filed out West Straight Gate through the dusty road to the plot

which, since the days of Monte Corvino, has been God's acre for the white barbarian who must leave his bones in Peking.

When the simple ceremony was over Helen returned with the decorously weeping servants, and prepared to face life alone. Within a week her world of affection and privilege had crumbled to ashes about her. She was no longer the reverenced daughter of the most powerful foreigner in China—no longer the petted darling of Peking. That did not distress her; it was the sense of loneliness, of desolation, that made it all so hard. And she was tortured by another thought which she strove constantly to put away—the thought of Weston.

She could never love him again, she told herself, but she could forgive him. He had much to live for—she, nothing. . . .

"Lau Dah," she said in the bleakness of the great empty compound, "promise me Way Ba-lee still lives!"

The old servant's anxious face lighted. "Yes, Little Missie, he lives. But his days are numbered."

"Lau Dah, could anything save him?"

"The Little Chairman could. No one else has that much influence with the General."

"Ancient Big, will you take me to her?"

Helen knew now what was in her heart. She experienced the exaltation of a great purpose.

The gateman bowed. In the pit of his stomach, as he would have expressed it, he smiled. He worshipped both these women.

Not on Red Arrow this time, but in a little closed hack, Helen went down Great Front Gate Avenue. She was heavily veiled. Lau Dah sat on the seat with the driver. An assistant driver dropped from his monkey-like perch behind to dart forward and steer the chubby Mongol pony through tangled traffic or head him around corners—for the habit of traveling unimpeded in a straight line, acquired on his native steppes, required more than bit and rein to control. They worked their way westward through *hutungs* so narrow that the Number-Two *mafoo* had to lift the back wheels to one side to negotiate a corner. When an alley broadened, out of respect for a tiny, picturesque temple, they

turned the pony at a right angle and bull-nosed him to a standstill.

Lau Dah knocked at a little red gate set deep in the high, grey wall. He was received with familiarity by the tall, gaunt gate-woman.

"Wait here!" he called to Helen.

Five minutes later two soldiers, wearing the red arm-bands of the Patriotic Army, appeared abruptly through the gateway.

"Foreign Missie," said one doffing his cap, "Moonlady commands you in the reception chamber."

A feeling of hopelessness descended upon her. The soldier drew the side-curtain and handed her down. His comrade fell in before, and he behind, and they marched her in military fashion across the courtyard to Muskhair's salon.

Helen seated herself and rolled up her veil to look about. Once more, Muskhair's salon was resplendent with color. On pantherskin divans sat exotic girl-children fingering weird-shaped instruments. Smoke arose before the green jade image of Tang, above

whose niche hung the five-bar flag, grotesquely out of tone with its setting.

Below the shrine was a divan raised higher than the rest, upon which reclined a young woman wearing a tiara of coral, feeding melon seeds to a huge green cockateel. Helen recognized the aristocratic profile and exquisite figure of the girl whom she had once dressed in her boudoir.

Moonlady tossed a few more seeds to the squawking bird. Then she turned slowly, her pointed oval chin high, the lights flashing in her eyes and her head-dress.

"She-cub of the Wolf," she said vibrantly, "what disastrous impulse brings you here? Do you not know that your life is in danger?"

As she spoke, all sense of hopelessness and uncertainty left Helen. She met the Chinese girl's eyes with a soft, faraway gaze.

"The greater the danger, the happier I am. Nothing can hurt me now. I do not wish to be compelled to find something to live for. I have come to ask you to take my life, if you wish, in return for that of the man you once professed to love . . ."

Moonlady regarded her in astonishment. "What, Way Be-lee—that Oath-breaker! You offer me your life for his! Yes, well you might, although I had not expected it. Was it not you who seduced him into being a tool for your despised father—was it not for infatuation of you that he broke his oath, abandoned his loyalty, threw away honor and reward? Now that he lies in a pit with a string to strangle himself—you might well offer your life to save him! What has come over you, my proud Christian? Fate must have taught you what love is! You appear to us more weighty!"

"Fate has taught me the bitterness of love," Helen answered softly. "Perhaps I no longer love Way Ba-lee. But I plead for him—I do not kill him . . ."

Moonlady dropped her eyes.

"But why this renunciation of him? It is certain that he loves you!" Her voice was tinged with irony.

"Should I love a man who plotted with you to kill my father?"

Suddenly Moonlady realized Helen's mis-

understanding of the theater episode. The English girl believed Barrie was party to the plot! She started to speak—then changed her mind.

The two women gazed at one another. But Helen was looking through Moonlady to something far away.

"So you put your father before your lover!" Moonlady broke the silence caustically. "I thought love took precedence over filial piety with you Westerners!"

"Then I may teach you something about us Westerners. Whatever my father was, I must remain his daughter!"

Moonlady lay back, her arm curled above her head. For some time she was silent, with closed eyes. When she looked again at Helen, her face had lost its bitterness.

"Your filial piety shames me," she said in a low voice, "but your love is weak. Look—read this!"

She reached to a table at the head of the divan and picked up a ragged piece of Chinese paper, spotted with blood.

Starflower, who had been at the farther end

of the room, jumped up and took it to Helen, looking at it with curiosity.

"Langdon: I shall try to rescue you at midnight. Be alert. W."

Helen read it and stared, bewildered, into Moonlady's eyes.

"Way Be-lee wrote this?"

Moonlady's voice turned to ice. "Way Ba-lee was given his freedom. He now lies under sentence of death because he took advantage of our favor to attempt the release of the human Wolf, your father. He knew nothing of the plot at the theater. That is the only wrong I ever did him . . . Your love greatly lacks trust!"

Helen clasped her hands in silence. She had thought wearily that no further emotion was possible. Now her face turned even paler behind the black veil, and she murmured: "Barrie, forgive me . . ."

Moonlady rose slowly, and pointed toward the hidden door. "Drag the foreign cub away!" she commanded.

The two soldiers came forward and led

Helen, unresisting, behind the long tapestry.

As they disappeared, the gaunt old gate-woman hobbled in with a card. "An ancient gentleman begs admittance at the door," she said, putting it down before Moonlady. "He says he is your father!"

Moonlady sank back into the cushions. "Tell him General Gwan wants to see him in the Shandoong Guild House. I will come and pay him obeisance there."

She grasped the seal of the big *joong* and gazed at it. A fleeting look of agony passed over her face.

Then she turned to the Blossoms. "Play!" she commanded. "Play Li Po:

'When man's desire with fate doth war, this—this avails alone—
To hoist the sail and let the gale and waters bear us on!' "

The music stopped. Moonlady glanced towards the door through which the soldiers had taken Helen. For the briefest instant a strange soft glow was in her eyes, the divine light of a resolution made by the soul. Then

it died, and in its place came dreaminess—the look of a prophet who gazes to a far horizon.

For truly one portal of her life had closed; but another was always open, and through it she saw her country waiting . . .

XIX

THE SILKEN CORD

HELEN was led through the littered passage behind the high walls into the dark tunnel. At the end of the passage, a rude wooden barrier was drawn aside and she was pushed into the blackness.

The barrier was put in place again. Helen leaned against a wall, straining her eyes to pierce the dark.

"Oh, God!" she whispered aloud. "If only I could see Barrie again . . . just for a little while! If only I could tell him . . ."

Then a miracle seemed to happen. Her prayer was answered. A husky voice replied:

"Who is there? . . . this is I—Barrie Weston!"

Her eyes were becoming accustomed now to the gloom—she could see a dim figure leaning against the opposite wall.

"Barrie!"

"Helen! Is it you? Is it *really* you? . . ."

She fell, sobbing, into his arms.

Only monosyllables passed between them. But time vanished and the darkness became a kindly enveloping fold, and the cool dampness of the flags a relief, and the narrow pit a refuge for a too great happiness . . .

Some hours later they were disturbed. A guard pulled the barrier open a crack. "Something for the foreign missie," he called, inserting his arm.

Helen arose and took what he held out. The barrier closed again.

"Why!" she said, coming back to Barrie's arms, "it's a cord! A large twisted-silk cord. What is it for?"

"Are there any knots in it?" he asked, with a strange tremor in his voice. "Let me feel. One! . . . You are to die after one day. There is only one knot left in mine. And since I refuse to strangle myself—tomorrow they will shoot me. As for you, dearest one. . . ."

But she had taken his head in her lap. Her soft lips found his brow.

"Barrie, I thank God I can die with you! Oh, I am happy . . . Moonlady is kind to me! She spoke truly, my darling! Fate, through you, has taught me at last what love is—something to be kept beyond death . . ."

Barrie clasped her tighter. Bending above her, he felt the quick breath of a little sob, and he stopped it with a kiss.

"Helen!" His voice faltered. "You should not kiss me. That night of the storm—I came from Moonlady . . ."

Her hand was withdrawn an instant from his face. Then it stopped his lips, and when he no longer struggled to speak, she raised her own lips in its stead.

Faintly the beating of gongs reached them. Time wheeled through the night on swift, silent wings. Now and again one of the pair slept, upon the other's breast. Then, suddenly, came a twanging, cymbal-like signal, the strokes falling faster and shriller with demoniacal effect until the utmost speed of the human arm was reached.

"Sunrise!" whispered Barrie.

The gate was jerked back and a gruff voice called them.

Weston rose, leading Helen by the hand.

Moonlady's courtyard was silent as they were taken through it. Barrie thought he heard a slight fluttering in the boudoir. The cockateel, perhaps . . . Then they were bundled into a closed motor-car, soldiers on either running-board shutting off the view.

"Where will they take us?" asked Helen.

"I suppose to the execution field outside the Peace-securing Gate . . ." But they paid scant attention to the fleeting glimpses of streets and walls. They were occupied entirely with one another.

Suddenly the car jerked to a stop. The doors were flung open and they were handed out into a street. The car sped away again, the soldiers clinging to the running-board as before.

They looked about them in bewilderment, trembling.

"The semi-lune of the Peking Hotel!" exclaimed Helen brokenly in dawning ecstasy.

A door porter came running out to them.

"Master wishes room?" he asked. "This-away, I helpee you. No have got baggage?" He looked at them critically. "Ah, clothes belly

bad—hotel gottee good laundly." Then he glanced at the disappearing car. "Before time big gas-car b'long Great President. Moonlady parties belly good, eh? All night till sunrise?" And he nodded knowingly at their dishevelment.

Mechanically Weston took Helen's arm, and they followed the boy, who led them under the carriage shelter. They walked mutely, gazing at one another in a comprehension of freedom . . . love . . . life . . .

"But why this!" Helen fingered the silken cord which she had unconsciously hung around her neck.

The door porter gathered the meaning of her question. "Ah, Missie," he smirked. "Red cord China-fashion b'long f'licity. Thisee big knot—you see no tie like other knot—b'long wedding knot! Moonlady good joker, eh?"

The beams of the rising sun struck the great revolving doors. Following the boy, Barrie and Helen, together, pushed into their blaze of light.

HAU-LEE'OW

260